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ENTERED AT THE POST OFFICE AT NEW YORK, N. Y., AS SECOND CLASS MATTER.

Vol. VII.

Published Every
Two Weeks.

Beadle & Adams, Publishers,
98 WILLIAM STREET, N. Y., April 7, 1880.

Ten Cents a Copy.
\$2.50 a Year.

No. 91

The Winning Oar; OR, THE INNKEEPER'S DAUGHTER.

A Story of Boston and of Cambridge, of the
College boy of Harvard, of the great boat-
race, of woman's love, man's treachery,
and sisterly devotion.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN,
AUTHOR OF "THE POLICE SPY," "OVERLAND
KIT," "INJUN DICK," "WOLF DEMON," ETC.

CHAPTER I. THE BLACK SHEEP.

Of all the pretty cities in New England—al-
most as renowned for handsome towns as the
old England from whence it takes its name—
not a single smiling hamlet can surpass fair
Cambridge, which, with its thirty odd thousand
people, is yet as truly a rural village as in the

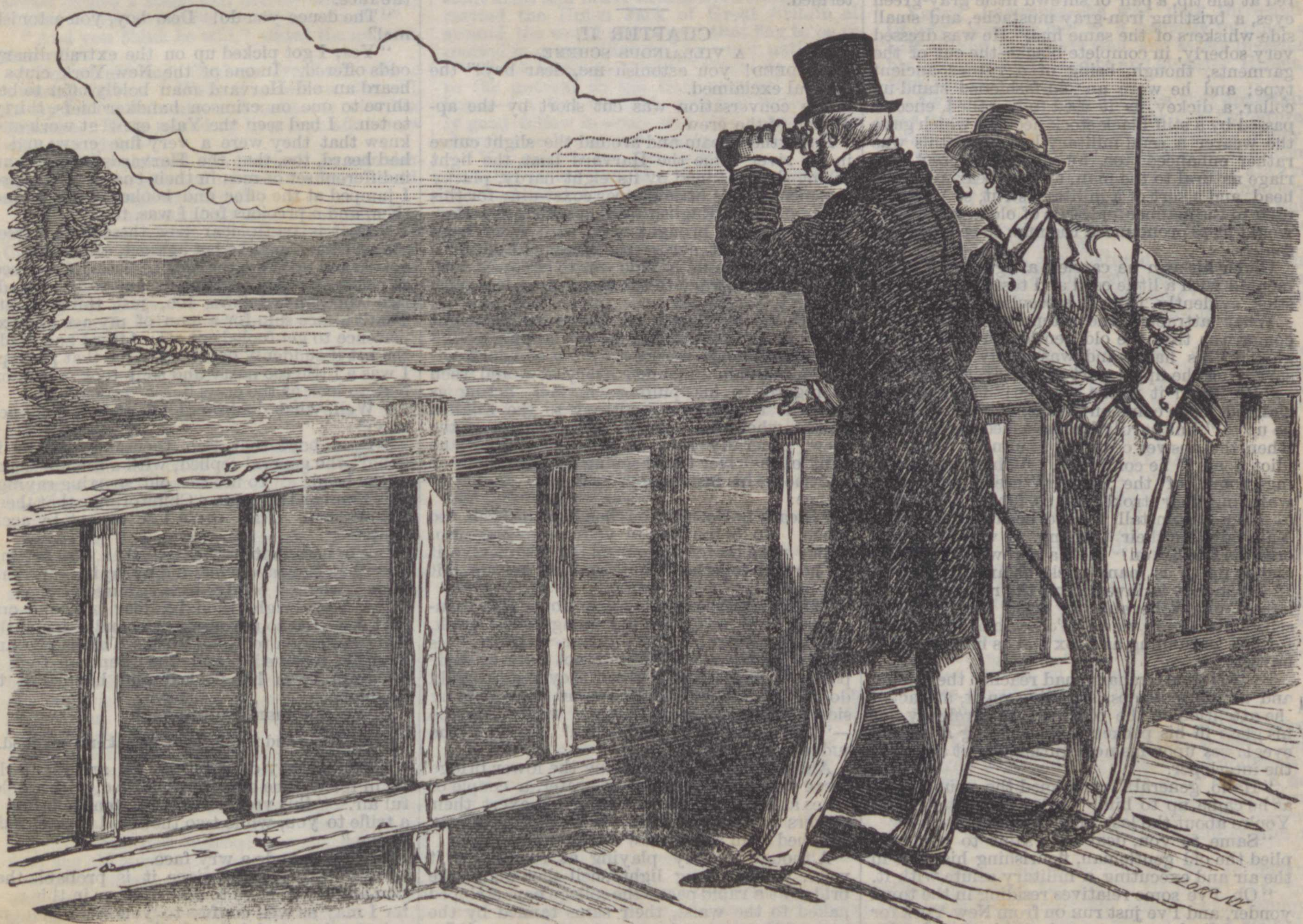
days of yore when it could boast but a scant
ten thousand.

As fair a suburb, too, as old Boston can boast,
Brookline and the Highland District to the con-
trary notwithstanding; the site of great Har-
vard college—the home of a full thousand of
eminent men, renowned in scholarship, in com-
merce, and in politics: yet to the boys of Har-
vard the pretty town owes most of its renown;
and of these lads of Harvard—the wearers of
the crimson handkerchiefs, which they have
bravely carried to the front in many a hard-
fought race—we are about to relate a story so
weird and strange, so improbable, at the first
glance, that, if we did not know the incidents to
be truth itself, we should hesitate to commit the
facts to ever-living print.

On a certain bright May morning, in the
year— Well, never mind the year; perhaps it
is as well not to deal too closely with figures;
but the stirring events which we are about to
chronicle are still so fresh in the memories of
the world at large that any one who peruses
this recital, and is at all familiar with the his-
tory of the contests between Yale and Harvard

for the championship of the waters, will surely
be able to fix the date as accurately as though I
had written it—a tall, good-looking, well-dressed
fellow got off a railway train at the little sta-
tion on the Brighton road, which used to be
called Cambridge Crossing, but is now dignified
by a more sounding appellation, and walked
slowly down the road which led into Cam-
bridgeport (as the lower part of the town is
called) by means of a bridge over the Charles
river. This structure is generally known as the
Brighton bridge, the second one spanning the
river as you ascend it from the broad lay be-
low, the first one being known as the Cottage
Farms bridge.

As we have said, this young man was a tall,
well-dressed fellow—in fact, a little too well-
dressed for good taste; he displayed altogether
too much jewelry; diamond studs glittered in
his shirt-front, a costly pin of the same brilliant
gem held together the folds of his scarf, a small
fortune in diamonds he wore in the shape of
rings upon his slender, white, aristocratic fin-
gers; the watch-chain that ornamented the
front of his snowy-white vest was as thick



WITH THE REGULARITY OF CLOCKWORK THE EIGHT OARS ROSE AND FELL, THE STROKE-OAR KEEPING A VIGILANT EYE UPON THE REST.

around as one's finger, and as he drew forth his timepiece to ascertain the hour, a careful observer would have seen that it, too, was richly, adorned with precious gems—a tiny little bit of a thing, fit only for a lady and utterly out of place in the possession of a gentleman.

At first glance one would have said that this very much dressed gentleman was a handsome fellow, for he had curly hair, black as jet, carefully oiled and arranged; a white, aristocratic-looking face, regular in its features, with the exception of the nose, which was slightly curved; the lips were rather thin and bloodless, and there was a hard, cruel expression about the eyes and mouth which could hardly be perceived at first, but to a close examiner it would have been perceptible, although the man took the greatest care to conceal it. A perfect actor was this individual, although no stage-player, and from an early age he had trained his features to conceal, and not to betray, the feelings of his heart.

Of good old blue Boston "cultus" blood came this gentleman, and yet his enemies said that he was a black sheep if ever there was one in this world.

He was called Harrison Grahame, but in the sporting world, where acute "sharps" most do congregate, he was far better known as Harry Gray, for thus he abbreviated his name when "on the turf." He had wit enough to understand that it was no creditable thing for a blue-blood Boston gentleman, a Beacon-Hillite born and bred, to appear in the public prints as the sporting gentleman, the high-spirited "Corinthian," who found the money to back the "Dublin Mouse" to box the "Pittsburg Chick-en," or had his daring deeds chronicled as the plucky sport who broke the Twenty-third street faro-bank in an eight hours' sitting.

Oh, no! the honored name of Harrison, so dear to Massachusetts annals—or Grahame, remembrance of ancient Scottish chivalry—must not be soiled in such a manner; but Harry Gray—why, Harry Gray could do anything, and no one of the fashionable circle in which he moved would be the wiser for it.

Carelessly flourishing the light gold-headed switch he carried, he strode along with a lengthy stride, apparently at peace with himself and all the world, and yet there was a look upon his face, every now and then, that would have betrayed to a close observer that he was far from being easy in his mind.

It did not take Mr. Harry Gray long to cover the distance which intervened between the railway station and the Brighton bridge over the Charles river, and as he approached the bridge the mysterious actions of a man on the upper side of the structure arrested his attention.

This person was well on in years, with a hard, wiry face, ornamented with a huge nose, very red at the tip, a pair of shrewd little gray-green eyes, a bristling iron-gray mustache, and small side-whiskers of the same hue. He was dressed very soberly, in complete black—the cut of the garments, though, being of a rather ancient type; and he wore an old-fashioned stand-up collar, a dickey, as it used to be called, encompassed by a stiff black stock necktie, which gave the wearer a semi-military look; and this was rather enhanced, too, by a peculiar, erect carriage natural to the man, an odd bearing to the head, and a sort of a military strut, so that one used to the manner and style of old army officers would have pronounced the man to be a veteran soldier.

Under his arm he carried a light cane ornamented with a little cord and tassel; no modern stick, evidently, from this peculiarity.

What attracted the attention of the newcomer was that the old gentleman had a field-glass in his hand, and was busily engaged in surveying the upper part of the river.

"By Jove! it is the veteran!" Grahame exclaimed, as he came on; "but, what on earth is he up to?" but hardly had he asked the question when the answer occurred to him. "What an idiot I am!" he continued. "This is the training-ground of the Harvard crew, and he is watching their stroke, just as, for the past week, at Lake Saltonstall, I have been watching the Yale boys in their training. I wonder which crew he has bet on? He's a shrewd old dodger, and is up to as many tricks as any man alive. If his money is invested on the right side perhaps I might be able to bring him into the scheme I have in view; he'd be no bad assistant, for he's as cunning as a fox and as heartless as a hawk!"

By this time Grahame had reached the bridge, and as his footsteps, sounding on it, attracted the attention of the old man, he carelessly put his glass in his pocket, and adjusting a pair of eyeglasses upon his nose turned to get a look at the interloper.

"Hallo, general!" exclaimed the young man, as he came up to him, "what brings you here? You're about the last man I expected to see!"

"Same to you, dear boy; same to you!" replied the old gentleman, flourishing his cane in the air and executing a military salute with it.

"Oh, I've some relatives residing in the town yonder, and I've just run on from New York for a visit," Grahame answered, shaking hands with the old gentleman, an operation on the part of

the general which was performed with great formality.

And now before I plunge deeper into the narrative I must give some account of this odd-looking old gentleman who is destined to play quite an important part in the story which I am about to relate.

He was popularly known as General Lycurgus McShouter, and among a certain class was about as widely acquainted as any man in the country. Few race gatherings were there of any importance, from New Orleans to Boston, that were not honored by the general's presence in the "quarter-stretch," as the noted locality next to the judge's stand, and sacred to the heavy bettors, horse-owners, jockeys, etc., is termed. Not a genteel blackleg in the country but knew the general, and there wasn't a colored guardian to the precincts of King Faro in the land but would at once display his "ivories" at the approach of the old gentleman, and gladly, without parley, admit him to the rooms sacred to the goddess of Fortune.

In fine, the general was an old sport, and was about as keen-headed and as unscrupulous an old scamp as the country could very well produce.

How he came by the title of "general" no one knew, although there was a tradition—we say a tradition, as for the last twenty years the general had not altered apparently in the least, and no one knew anything more about him than than at present—that he was formerly an officer in the army, and had been cashiered for some questionable practices.

The general when questioned upon the point, always insisted that he was one of the veterans of the war of 1812 and that he had won a general's grade in that struggle, and when asked as to his age, replied with great gravity that he was one hundred and ten years old, and that he fully expected to live to be a hundred and fifty at the least.

"Some relatives, eh?" the general remarked.

"Yes, but what brings you here?"

"Oh, friends, in Boston—friends in Boston!" the general replied, lightly swinging his switch in the air.

"Yes, but what are you doing on this bridge?"

"Merely taking the air."

"With a field-glass, eh?"

"Observing the scenery, that's all, dear boy!"

"And you are not watching the Harvard crew?"

"Oh, what an idea!"

"See! here they come now!" and Grahame pointed up the stream, and the general instantly turned his keen, hawk-like eyes in the direction. "I take a great deal of interest in this crew."

"Ah, you do?"

"Yes; the stroke oar is my cousin, Otis Lawrence, or 'Bub' Lawrence as he is generally termed."

CHAPTER II.

A VILLAINOUS SCHEME.

"INDEED! you astonish me, dear boy!" the general exclaimed.

The conversation was cut short by the approach of the crew.

Down the stream and around the slight curve in the river came the Harvard boat, the light racing shell manned by its eight hardy, plucky oarsmen and its little dapper coxswain; for this year, after the English fashion which the Harvard boys had brought back with them from their brief visit across the water to Albion's shores, the race with Yale was to be rowed with coxswains contrary to the usual American custom.

With the regularity of clockwork the eight oars rose and fell, the stroke-oar keeping a vigilant eye upon the rest of the crew and instructing an individual member every now and then in regard to his pulling; in fact, acting as "coach" to the crew, contrary to the English custom where the "coach," an instructor of the crew, generally runs at full speed along the bank of the river thus keeping up with the boat and shouts his instructions at them. As for instance:

"Steady! No. 3! you bend your back too much. No. 5, too long in your recovery. No. 4, put more power in your elbow. Now give it to her, all together!—quicken! hit her up, hit her up!"

The crew were not rowing in downright earnest but were only paddling along, so to speak, for they well knew that vigilant, watching eyes were upon them, and it was not part of their policy to show exactly what they really could do until the day of the race came, when, side by side with their opponents, they waited for the—"Are you ready, gentlemen? Go!" of the judge.

And then, too, after passing the lower bridge there was a broad stretch of water, a couple of miles at the least, where they could exert their powers without danger of being so closely watched as in the narrow stream above.

Although merely playing at rowing, as it were, yet the long light shell shot under the bridge at a rapid pace—the college boys stripped naked to the waist, their skins tanned by the rays of the sun as brown almost as a red Indian's, and their heads surmounted by the crim-

son handkerchief which so often had led the way, in many a hard-fought race, past the judge's stand.

Under the bridge darted the boat, emerged on the other side, and went flashing down the river, the four pair of oars moving with the regularity of time itself; past the old powder-house and its little dock on the Cambridge side, past Gipsy Grove, the old-time swimming place of the Boston boys on the Brookline shore, where in the halcyon days of our boyhood, my brother George—now in the silent tomb, his busy pen condemned to the rest which in this life he never gave—and myself learned like the ancient Romans, "to rise victorious over the wave;" under the Cottage Farms bridge and out into the broad bay beyond went the boat.

Turning and leaning their backs against the rail the two men from their point of vantage watched the boat until it disappeared under the Brookline bridge.

The general by means of the field-glass had watched the crew very narrowly indeed, and as the boat disappeared from sight he closed the glass up and with a half-sigh returned it to his pocket.

The young man with his shrewd, cunning eyes had watched the old man narrowly and he fancied that, despite the astuteness of the old fox, he could detect what was passing within his mind.

"Well, what do you think of the crew?" he asked; "a deuced good one, isn't it?"

"Yes, dear boy, a very fine crew, indeed; the best crew that I have seen for many a long day. They are only just paddling along—just playing at pulling, you know—and yet they are making about thirty strokes to the minute."

And then for the first time the young man noticed that the general had his watch out and that he had been timing the boat.

"Well, that's pretty good," Grahame observed, as the general returned the watch to his pocket.

"Pretty good, dear boy!" exclaimed the old man, elevating his eyebrows: "well, I should say that it *was* pretty good! That crew, sir, on the day of the race, when pushed can make from forty-two to forty-six strokes to the minute, and put power in them, too. Did you notice how their stroke takes hold of the water, and what a splendid recovery they have, too? By the eternal Jove, sir! I don't believe that there is a crew in the world that can beat them in a fair race!"

"It's a pity that you have bet heavily against them," Grahame observed, carelessly.

"Eh!" cried the general, sharply, turning in surprise; "how did you know that?"

"Oh, guessed it, that's all," answered Grahame. "I'm in the same boat; I stand to lose ten thousand dollars if the Harvard crew wins the race."

"The deuce you do! Dear boy, you astonish me!"

"Yes; I got picked up on the extraordinary odds offered. In one of the New York clubs I heard an old Harvard man boldly offer to bet three to one on crimson handkerchiefs, thirty to ten. I had seen the Yale crew at work and knew that they were a very fine crew, and I had heard, too, that the Harvards had only an indifferent set of men in their boat this year, so I jumped at the offer and booked it there and then, and a precious fool I was, too."

"That is truth, dear boy, these dark horses are terrible things to bet against, sometimes. I got picked up the same way. The odds offered struck me as being ridiculous, and so I invested; two thousand dollars, too, just think of it! That's a nice sum for a man of my age and experience to get fooled out of! After I had made the bet it suddenly occurred to me that perhaps I was a little too hasty and so I took a run on here to look at the crew."

"Well, what do you think of your chance now?"

"Dear boy! that two thousand dollars is gone!" the general replied, with a solemn shake of the head. "To use the old sporting saying, it is Lombard street to a China orange that these fellows win. They can't lose except by accident."

"We had better 'hedge,' then, by betting now that Harvard wins, and by laying sufficient money we may be able to save ourselves."

"A very bright thought, dear boy, and one that occurred to me yesterday, and I instantly telegraphed on to New York. This is the answer I received," and the general took a telegram from his pocket and handed it to Grahame.

The young man read it aloud:

"Odds four and five to one; no takers; no good."

"You see, my dear fellow, we are regularly let in for it," the general remarked, with a doleful air. "But you can stand it; ten thousand is a trifle to you, while two thousand is utter ruin to me."

Grahame made a wry face.

"My dear general, since it is probable that you and I will have to act together in this matter I may as well confess to you that I haven't raised a thousand dollars in the world to save my life."

"You astound me!"

"It's the truth; I've been terribly unlucky of late; I am very deeply involved, indeed, and I relied upon this bet to help me out. Hark ye, general, I'm in a pretty bad box, and I've just made up my mind the Harvard crew have got to lose this race!"

"Difficult, difficult, dear boy," cried the general, with a wise shake of the head. "These college chaps have got such queer notions of honor and all that sort of thing. You can't buy 'em, you know, to 'throw' the race, like you can these common oarsmen, once in a while."

"By fair means they can't lose and so by foul means they must!" Grahame replied, a determined light shining in his eyes.

"Oho! I think I understand," the general said, with a knowing wink, after a moment's pause; "this stroke-oar, your cousin, Bub did you say his name is? You can do something with him. He could manage the matter easily enough. Thirty thous'! Make him an offer to stand in with him; give him half the swag; fifteen thousand dollars ain't to be sneezed at."

"It would be as much as my life is worth to even hint at such a thing, for Bub is as fine an athlete as there is in the country, and he most surely would try to strangle me on the spot. A million in gold wouldn't buy him to 'throw' the race."

"Dear me, dear me!" exclaimed the general, reflectively; "a remarkable man—and they are so scarce, too!"

"No; whatever is done must be done by cunning and by trickery. Bub has one weak side, like all these muscular, big-hearted men. He is as simple and trusting as a child. He likes me, and believes me to be the best friend that he has on earth, when, in reality, I have hated him from boyhood as bitterly as possible. His very birth was a grievous wrong to me. I am some five years his senior. His father and my father were brothers; my uncle was a rich man and a confirmed old bachelor, as all supposed, while my father was a poor man. Bub's father always liked me from my birth, and often said that I should be his heir, and then all of a sudden he took it into his head to get married. Bub was born, and of course that put my nose completely out of joint, although the old fellow when he died had the decency to leave me twenty thousand dollars, but what was that paltry sum compared to the half million which Bub and his sister, Helena, came in for?"

"Oho! dear boy, go for the sister!"

"That is exactly my game and that is partly why I came here now. I have been paying court to Helena for some time; she's a shy girl, but I rather think she favors me. At any rate, she will not go against her brother if he advises her to accept. So, upon his decision all depends. If he says yes and accepts me as Helena's future husband, all will be well. I'll make a clean breast of how I stand and borrow some money of him to meet my debts; but if he refuses—"

"And you think he will," added the general, shrewdly.

"I'm afraid so," Grahame replied, with a lowering brow. "Well, if he refuses, then I'll do my best to ruin him and make his crew lose this race. He is mixed up in a love affair now with two girls—"

"Two?" exclaimed the general, in astonishment; "by the beard of my grandfather! wouldn't one be enough at a time?"

"Well, it's an odd affair, and I'll explain it to you as we walk along. Come with me up to old Cambridge. I am to meet Bub at five this afternoon at a certain place where the students resort, and after my interview with him, we can lay our plans, if I fail in my suit, as I think I will, despite Bub's friendship for me."

CHAPTER III.

THE WOODBINE INN.

"Go ahead!" cried the general; "I am with you, dear boy, in anything to save my leetle two thousand."

"We may as well walk," Grahame suggested, as he led the way from the bridge; "we'll have plenty of time to get there before the crew come back and we can talk the matter over as we walk along."

Grahame, acquainted with the town, conducted his companion through the cross streets until they reached the main thoroughfare, the elm-shaded Main street, up which they walked toward the colleges.

"Now to begin at the beginning I'll explain how I came to be so well posted in regard to Bub and his doings. One of his love affairs he himself confided to me and the other was told me in strict confidence by one of the college boys whom I met in New York last week. In regard to the first love affair, Bub boards in the house of a certain Dr. Artemas Peabody, a distant relation of our family, a scholar of great knowledge but of limited means. When Bub's father died he made this doctor a guardian over Bub—who was not of age then—and of his sister, who has just reached her majority. In fact, the old gentleman has acted as Bub's tutor ever since he was old enough to learn anything and has been to him more like a father than anything else. Now, the doctor has a daughter—a pretty, fawn-like girl, named Winifred.

She has always been a great favorite of Bub's; being brought up together they have always been like a brother and sister. Well, now, the last time I was on here I noticed that there was a slight change in the manner of the pair toward each other, and I instantly suspected that there was a sort of a love-affair between them. I joked Bub on the subject, and as he became quite grave over the matter, I feel pretty certain that I had guessed correctly. In order to sound the doctor I hinted slightly in regard to the matter, but you can judge of my surprise when he became terribly excited, declared that I must be wrong, that they only regarded each other as brother and sister, and that a marriage between them was utterly impossible, and begged that I would never mention such a thing to anybody. Here was mystery number one.

"And the second love-affair, confided to me in strict confidence by this Harvard student whom I met in New York, takes in a girl named Kitty Googage. She is the daughter of an old couple who keep a sort of an English ale-house called the Woodbine Inn situated near Harvard Square, a great resort of the collegians. The father is an old English oarsman, who acts as a sort of coach to the college crews, and what is rather strange in such a man, he is a most rigid church-member. This girl, Kitty, has only lately come to Cambridge and there is something odd about her. 'Something not just on the square,' this young fellow said, but that was all that I could get out of him, except the information that there was a desperate flirtation going on between Bub and the girl, and there's mystery number two."

"Deuced interesting, my boy!"

"Yes; well, I'm going to meet Bub at this Woodbine Inn and at the same time I can take a look at the girl. I rather flatter myself that I shall be able to find out the mystery that is connected with her, but as for the other one, the old doctor's niece, I confess I am puzzled."

"Ah, well, time may reveal it."

The further conversation that took place between the two is not worth detailing, being of little interest, until they reached their destination.

The Woodbine Inn was a plain little white cottage surrounded by a large garden filled with shrubbery in the midst of which small arbors were constructed wherein little tables were placed for the accommodation of the customers.

It was a charming rural retreat, so different from the average American bar-room that it was little wonder that it was well patronized by the college boys.

Entering one of the arbors Grahame rapped upon the table, and the summons was answered by a big, burly, middle-aged man, whose general build and broad face betrayed at the first glance that he was a son of Albion's isle—one of those brawny, beef-fed, beer-drinking Britons whose stout arms and brave hearts have triumphantly carried the Union Jack of Great Britain all around the world and caused that flag to be respected in every clime and by every nation.

"That's Googage himself," Grahame observed to the general as the host emerged from the house—"a fine oarsman, a capital boxer, a jolly good fellow in every way, and yet as strict a church-member as any deacon in the land."

"You surprise me, dear boy."

"Glad to see you, Mr. Grahame!" exclaimed the host, ducking his partly bald head as he came up to the arbor; "you're quite a stranger!"

Googage spoke with an English accent as broad as his person, and his round, healthy face beamed with good-nature as he looked upon the young gentleman, for was not his guest the cousin and particular friend of "Bub" Lawrence, the stroke-oar of the Harvard crew? and as Googage always declared, with great energy, the finest amateur oarsman that ever stepped foot within a boat or feathered a pair of sculls—the best man that Harvard college had ever seen, or any other college either, for that matter!

"Yes, I've just taken a run on to see Bub."

"He's with the crew on the river for a spin, but he'll be back soon."

"He'll stop in here on the way home, I presume?"

"Oh, yes, he always does, and all the rest of 'em, too; they allers wants a glass of my ginger ale to wash the dust out of their throats."

"Bub's crew is pretty sure to win this time, eh?" Grahame asked carelessly.

"Sure to win? Why, bless my soul, it's a horse to a hen on them!" cried the old man, enthusiastically.

"But they say the Yale crew is the best one that college has had for years," the general observed.

"It don't matter the weight of a pin, sir," the old man declared, with a wise shake of the head; "Bub's crew will beat 'em all to pieces."

"Well, I hope so."

"Oh, you can bet on it, and you don't stand no show whatsoever to lose."

Grahame and the general exchanged glances at this bold declaration.

"Yes, sir," the old man continued, "if I warn't a member of the church, and hadn't given up all those sinful practices, there isn't a

dollar that I could raise in the world that I wouldn't put on that crew."

"I guess we'll try a glass of that famous ginger ale of yours while we are waiting," Grahame said, and the old man, first ducking his head, hurried away to procure the article.

"If Bub goes back on me, as I'm sadly afraid that he will, in this matter of his sister, why then we'll have to set our wits to work to defeat this wonderful crew; by fair means or foul we must fix it so that the Harvard boys sha'n't win the race."

"Yes, dear boy, that is our leetle game."

The host returned with the ginger ale, placed the sparkling beverage before the two gentlemen, received his money, and then again withdrew.

The two plotters partook of the beverage and discussed, as they waited, many a wily scheme to work harm to the Harvard crew.

"He'll soon be here," said Grahame, at last, consulting the little jeweled timepiece he wore. "You had better get out so that we can speak freely."

"Oh, yes, certainly; I've got a newspaper in my pocket, and I'll just take possession of one of those arbors at the back of the yard so as to be within hail when you want me. Push it home to him, dear boy, for if you don't get the girl then it's good-by to your ten thousand dollars unless we can devise some way to beat the Harvard crew, and I'm afraid that will be no easy matter."

"Time will tell," Grahame replied, laconically.

And then the general strolled off, and just in time, too, for a party of brown-faced young men came into the garden.

Some twelve or fifteen composed the party, and fine specimens of rugged, healthy, manly beauty were they; hardly a man of them all that could not have stripped as a model for a young Hercules or a godlike Apollo.

Seating themselves at a circular table, under the shade of a huge cherry-tree, they called loudly for their ginger ale, and then chaffed the good-natured Englishman liberally when he brought it.

The leader of the party was a tall, well-proportioned youth, standing at least five feet ten, and built from the ground upward, to use the old sporting expression—a blue-eyed, blonde-haired, smoothly-shaven young gentleman, with as finely a proportioned head as ever sat on human shoulders. The features were prominent and regular, and there was a good, frank expression about the face that would be certain to win friends at the first glance.

This was Otis Lawrence, a descendant of one of the oldest and richest New England families—a race who could trace back its line right to the day of the Puritan fathers, a set of godly men, but, withal, a narrow-minded, tyrannical set of bigots as ever existed.

Young Lawrence—he was only three-and-twenty—was the heir to a princely fortune; a half million of dollars well and safely invested his father had left, and he and his sister, Helena, were the only legatees.

Lawrence had all the qualities that appertain to a noble manhood; frank and loyal by nature, quick to aid a friend, slow to resent an injury, he was a very prince of good-fellows, and from his great flow of animal spirits, being always full of life and fun, he had been unanimously dubbed "Bub" by all his friends, and as Bub Lawrence he was far better known than by his own proper appellation.

With many a good-natured jest and cheerful laugh the party drank their ginger ale, and then the host remembering Grahame told Bub that that gentleman was waiting to see him.

Bub rose at once.

"My cousin, gentlemen, has done me the honor to pay me a visit; so for the present you must excuse me," he said, and then bowing an adieu, he hastened to join Grahame in the arbor.

CHAPTER IV.

BUB, THE STROKE-OAR.

THE meeting between the two young men was warm and hearty, genuinely so on the part of Bub, and affectedly so on Grahame's side, for, as the reader already knows, the black sheep bore the Harvard stroke-oar no great amount of love.

"Well, Harrison, I'm glad to see you!" Bub exclaimed, taking the chair that the other pushed toward him. "Did you take a run over to have a look at the crew? You were always a great betting man, so I suppose that you have invested heavily on the race."

"Yes, about thirty thousand dollars."

Bub indulged in a prolonged whistle.

"Well, well!" he exclaimed, in astonishment, "you have been going it rather strong! But don't you think that thirty thousand dollars is a large sum to stake upon what, after all, is a decided uncertainty? for, Harrison, there is no telling which is the winning crew until we pull by the judge's boat and the deciding gun is fired."

The stroke-oar never doubted for an instant that his cousin had staked his money that the Harvard crew would win, and it rather annoyed him to think that Harrison in his cousin's

partisanship—as Bub supposed—should risk so large a sum.

"Oh, well, I felt so confident about the result," the other answered, carelessly.

"You thought the race was all over except the shouting, eh?" Bub suggested, with a laugh.

"Well, not quite so bad as that."

"The Yale boys have a good crew, they say," the stroke-oar observed, thoughtfully.

"And you have a good crew, too."

"Yes, as good as ever pulled an oar!" cried Bub, in warmth.

"And if you were a betting man you would back your side largely, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, with every dollar that I could raise!"

"And yet you blame me."

"Ah, Harrison, but it isn't prudent, you know; I'm always too hasty and let my enthusiasm run away with my judgment," Bub replied, slowly. "Bet a couple of thousand if you like; but take my advice and don't risk thirty; it is entirely too much; and, excuse the question, Harrison—can you afford to lose any such sum in case we fail to win? An accident, you know, may defeat the best of crews. One of our men may go amiss on the very day of the race, an oar may break, or some blundering booby may run a boat in our way; a hundred things may happen to snatch victory from our grasp even at the very moment of success."

"Well, Bub, of course you know how I am situated," said the other, affecting to be deeply interested by the remarks of the stroke-oar. "Of course I can't afford to lose two thousand, let alone thirty."

"Ah, Harrison, a man should not venture what he has not got! It is bad enough to lose money but honor is far more precious."

"Well, I'll take your advice, and hedge so as to stand safe whichever way the race goes."

"Do, and you'll take a weight off my mind!" cried Bub, his face lighting up, and he bestowed upon the other a warm grasp of the hand.

"But how about the other matter that I hinted at in my letter?"

Bub's face became quite grave.

"You mean in regard to my sister, Helena?"

"Yes."

"Well, Harrison, I hardly know what to say; you place me in a very embarrassing position. Helena is hardly more than a child; she is not old enough to think of marriage yet."

"She is eighteen."

"Yes."

"And she has had a half a dozen suitors already, but perhaps you prefer this young Virginian, Mr. Richard Randolph Peyton, or Dicky Dolph, as the college boys call him, to me? He's the coxswain of your crew, isn't he?"

"Yes, but that idea is all nonsense!" Bub exclaimed, impatiently. "Dicky is only a boy."

"Folks couple his name with your sister's, though."

"That is because he boards at the doctor's, and is a strong friend of mine. He loves me like a brother."

"Of course, Peyton is rich and I'm poor—"

"Harrison, can you think so meanly of me as to believe that that would have any influence over me if there was no other reason?" Bub cried, impetuously.

"Oh, there is another reason, then?"

"Yes, and I might as well speak plainly. You know that I stand in the light of a father to Helena, and I regard it as my sacred duty to see her happily bestowed in life. Her husband must be a man against whom the breath of suspicion has never been directed."

"That is as much as to say that I am not that kind of a man," Grahame observed, his face growing pale and his eyes beginning to shine wickedly.

"Harrison, Heaven knows that I would gladly evade this task if I could," the stroke-oar replied, with a troubled voice, his whole manner plainly betraying the agitation under which he labored, "for I like you, Harrison—like you as well as any man that breathes the breath of life this day, but the faults that I can pardon in you as a friend I cannot overlook when you appear as a suitor for the hand of my sister."

"What do you mean? I confess I do not understand you."

Harrison's manner was quite calm, amazement apparent but no trace of any other feeling, despite the fact that rage was burning within his heart, and stirring every pulse in his being.

"Why, Harrison, you know that you left college here before your time."

"Yes; study did not agree with me."

"The men of your class don't speak well of you; and Harrison, old boy, don't force me to say anything more. Take 'No' for an answer like a good fellow, and let us have done with this disagreeable subject forever."

"Oh, no, Otis; you don't know me at all if you think for a single moment that I would be content to rest silent under any accusation!" Harrison replied, spiritedly, and endeavoring to assume an appearance of great frankness; and he succeeded very well, too, for the man was an excellent dissembler. "And as for the men of my class—well, we didn't get on together at all. The fact is, Bub, I always hated college."

"Harrison, the college returns the sentiment," the stroke-oar replied, quietly.

A slight flush appeared upon Grahame's pale cheeks as he winced under the well-directed shot, and for a moment he showed his white teeth viciously.

"Well, I presume that there isn't any love lost between the college and myself," he said, after a slight pause. "I will own that I was never much of a student, and that I had very little sympathy or association with the men of my class. I presume they say that I used to play cards a great deal."

"Yes, they do."

"Well, I suppose I must plead guilty to that. I confess that while I was at college I *did* have a regular mania for card-playing."

"But that isn't the worst of it, Harrison," Bub observed, quietly.

"What more do they say?"

"They say that you played cards too well."

"They mean that I cheated, eh?" cried Harrison, growing very pale indeed.

"No, they don't say that openly, but they say that you always used to win, and that your antagonists generally were men who had money and yet didn't know enough to take care of it—mere boys, in fact, no match for you in any way."

"Well, that's an ugly report about a man, isn't it?" Harrison cried, sarcastically, endeavoring to force a laugh; "and all because I used to have a poker party in my rooms once in a while, and the foolish louts who bantered me to play whined when they lost their money. Oh, I'm a regular gambler, I presume, a first-class blackleg, and I make my living by picking up and fleecing unsuspecting youth with more money than brains."

"Oh, no; not so bad as that!"

"Do they say anything else?"

"Isn't that quite enough?"

"Oh, no! I didn't know but that they would make out that I used to pick pockets in the class-room, or play highwayman on the college campus. They might as well have made a good story while they were about it."

Harrison was decidedly sarcastic.

"Old fellow, I am sorry that I was forced to tell you this, but it could not be avoided."

"On account of these stories, then—these lying reports, you would object to my marriage with Helena, even though she desired the union?"

"But, Harrison, she don't," Bub replied, quietly. "I hinted to her about the matter today, and she said enough to convince me that she likes you as a cousin only."

"Well, I'm sorry; it's quite a disappointment to me; but let the matter pass. I trust that it will not sever our friendship."

"Not a bit!" cried Bub, instantly, giving the other another hearty gripe of the hand, "for I like you, Harrison; you're a deuced good fellow, anyway. But you must excuse me now; I see the boys are off. Come up to the house and see us. Good-by!" and then Bub hurried away to join his companions, and they all quitted the garden together.

The general came from his corner and found Grahame glaring with angry eyes and a face white with passion after the young men.

There was hardly need of a question, for the shrewd old man understood at once that the day had gone against his companion.

"Well, well; you didn't make it, eh?"

"No, curse him; he has heard that I make a living by card-playing—"

"What of that?" cried the general, in profound astonishment; "is it possible that he objects to that? Why, he plays!"

"Yes, for the fun of the thing. There is a great difference, you know, between men who play for amusement and money and regular card-sharps like ourselves. There's only one thing to be done; the Harvard crew must be made to lose this race. We must entrap this stroke-oar in some way!"

"Dear boy, I saw the very instrument for our purpose in the house just now—the girl, the old man's daughter, this Kitty with whom your cousin is infatuated. And no wonder! She's an old acquaintance of ours, and I rather fancy that we have got her under our thumb. The old man has gone out; rap on the table and she undoubtedly will come, and then you shall see what you shall see!"

Grahame obeyed at once.

A slender, delicate, ladylike girl, with jet-black hair and wonderful dark eyes, dressed plainly, came tripping from the house, but the moment she beheld the pair a cry of alarm came from her lips, and she fell imploringly upon her knees.

"For Heaven's sake, do not betray me!" she cried.

CHAPTER V.

THE INNKEEPER'S DAUGHTER.

It was quite a striking tableau; the girl on her knees, her features convulsed with agitation, and the two men gazing at her in profound astonishment.

"Upon my life this is really wonderful!" Grahame exclaimed.

"Perfectly miraculous!" the general added.

"For Heaven's sake do not betray me!" the girl repeated, rising slowly to her feet and gazing wistfully into the faces of the two men.

"Well, I am astounded!"

"Dear boy! you could knock me down with a feather!" the old man cried, like an echo, putting on his eye-glasses and assuming a theatrical attitude, indicative of intense surprise.

"You are the very last persons that I expected to see," the girl went on, still glaring with an air of apprehension upon the two.

"Believe me that with equal justice I could make the same remark," Grahame replied, removing his hat and making a polite bow.

The general at once followed his example.

"Yes, my dear young lady, in point of fact we are completely flabbergasted!"

"But I should have recognized you, though, at once, although I miss the tawny hair of the bewitching siren who has played the deuce with so many young hearts," Grahame continued.

"And old hearts, too, dear boy!" the general added, quickly, with a gallant bow to the lady.

"I plead guilty to the soft impeachment. I fell over head and ears in love with you at the first glance. Ah, who could withstand those matchless eyes?"

"A truce to this raillery, gentlemen!" the girl exclaimed, evidently annoyed. "Can I trust you to keep my secret?"

"Oh, certainly!" Grahame replied at once.

"You can depend upon us; we will be as dumb as oysters! the thumb-screws—the rack—the torture could not tear your secret from our breasts!" The general was nothing if not extravagant.

"But, in order to completely understand the matter, will you have the kindness to explain to us exactly what and who you are—that is, I mean, *at present*, for of course any one who has once looked upon your beautiful face and been charmed by your accomplishments in the sphere in which you generally move would never be able to forget you," the young man observed.

"Never!" cried the general, emphatically; "the dear boy is right; it would be morally impossible to forget you!"

"My name is Kitty Googage, and I am the daughter of the old couple who keep this inn," the girl confessed.

"The innkeeper's daughter, eh?"

"Precisely; quite a romance, dear boy!"

"Yes, I am the innkeeper's daughter."

"But I do not understand," Grahame persisted; "if you are Kitty Googage, the daughter of this old couple, how comes it that we know you under another name and in a far different walk of life? Your hair, too, is jet-black, and yet when I had the extreme pleasure of making your acquaintance almost a year ago, you were a most bewitching blonde."

"I can explain all in a few words!" the girl responded, evidently deeply agitated. "I lead a double life. Here in this rural retreat I am Kitty Googage, old Ben Googage's daughter, and no one who knows me even dreams for a single instant that I am anything but a plain and simple country girl. What I am in New York you already know."

"Yes, yes; but I do not comprehend why this thing should be," Grahame urged, a puzzled expression upon his face, "What is the meaning of this double life?"

"The riddle is easily read," the girl replied, a spice of bitterness perceptible in her tone. "I grew up a foolish, silly girl; chance brought me in contact with some persons whose flattery and advice turned what little brains I possessed; they urged me to cultivate the gifts with which Heaven had endowed me; they said that it was a shame I should remain here in seclusion, when by going out into the world I could acquire a fortune. I was vain—what young girl is not, unless she is plain to ugliness? I knew that silks and satins would become me better than calico—that my fingers would look prettier adorned with diamonds than when hooped with plain gold. I became crazy upon this one idea. Why should I remain here in humble poverty and toil all my life for a bare crust, when, by going out into the great, giddy world I could secure a fortune?"

"Not to be thought of for a moment! The idea is perfectly absurd!" the general interpolated.

"Sleeping or waking the idea was always in my mind," the girl continued. "I thought at first that I could persuade my parents to let me go, but one day when I just hinted of such a thing, the proposal was received by them with horror. Both of my parents are church members of the strictest kind, although only poor and humble people, but they believe in the faith that is in them and live up to it in the strictest manner. I was not prepared for the utter disapproval which the idea met with. 'No, no, lass,' said my father—he is an old countryman, and speaks broadly when excited—'I would rather see thee in thy grave than to have thee earn thy bread in such a manner.' My mother said nothing, but she cried as if her heart would break. I saw that it was useless to say anything more. My plan must be either given up or else carried out without my parents' knowledge, for

I plainly understood that it was a hopeless task to attempt to gain their consent."

"But you were determined not to give it up though?" Grahame pressed his inquiry.

"Deuced plucky, too; wouldn't have believed that you had it in you!" the general exclaimed, cutting the figure eight in the air with the point of his light switch.

"My evil genius urged me on," the girl replied, with a bitter accent. "I was mad to go, and since I could not obtain my parents' consent, I determined to go without it, but I could not bear the thought of acting in open disobedience to their wishes, for no father or mother could have been kinder to a child than they had been to me; so I determined to devise some plan by means of which they would be kept in ignorance of my bold adventure. Times were very hard with us then; my father had just started this little inn, and it was not prospering; he had about made up his mind to give it up and so lose all that he had invested in it, when I suggested to him to let me go to New York and get a place. I was very skillful with my needle, could make all sorts of fancy-work, and I told him that I was sure that I could make good wages, and that I would be able to send him some money every week. He hated to let me go and fought against the idea for some time, but, as affairs here did not improve, at last he consented, and I went to New York. I succeeded in my attempt, and what I am there now you know as well as I do. Ten months in the year I am in the city, the other two, July and August, I spend here; but this year I came home a month earlier than usual—an unlucky chance, since it has betrayed my secret, but I trust that it will be safe in your care."

"Oh, you may depend upon it."

"Wild horses, dear girl, couldn't drag it from us!" the general asserted.

"But what do your parents think that you are doing in New York these ten months in the year?" Grahame asked. He had a deeper motive than mere curiosity in putting the question, but the girl never suspected it, and so she answered frankly:

"I am supposed to be the forewoman in a large millinery store on Broadway and get quite a handsome salary, nearly all of which I send home to my parents. It is terrible to lead this lying life!" the girl cried, suddenly, with a passionate outburst, "and my parents, I know, would sooner starve than touch a cent of the money if they only knew how I earned it."

"Ah, people will be so foolish sometimes!" the general exclaimed, with a wise shake of the head. "I only wish that I had a daughter, or two or three of them for that matter, who could pick up a cool hundred dollars a week as you do," and the old man sighed mournfully at not being possessed of such a treasure.

"You have your letters addressed to this millinery store then?" Grahame asked. "You see what an interest I take in your story by my curiosity."

"Yes; the proprietor is a personal friend of mine."

"But, suppose either your father or mother should take it into their heads to come on to New York without giving you notice and so surprise you with an unexpected visit?"

"Yes, yes, that would be deuced awkward, eh, dear girl?"

"Oh, no! it is very unlikely that such a thing should happen; but, even that is provided for," the girl replied, quietly. "Any one going to the store and asking for me will be conducted at once to the proprietor, and she will say that I have been unexpectedly called down South to attend to a valued customer, so you perceive that there is very little chance of discovery."

"Beautifully planned!" the general cried.

Grahame was silent for a moment, watching the girl in his cool way, and then he delivered the blow over which he had been cogitating.

"Do you know, Miss Kitty, I had a great curiosity to see you, although, of course, I had no idea that you would turn out to be an old acquaintance?"

"To see me?" in surprise.

"Yes, I wanted to see what sort of a girl it was who had taken the fancy of my handsome cousin, Bub Lawrence, old Harvard's winning oar."

CHAPTER VI.

THE VIRGINIAN.

OVER the pale face of the girl swept a burning blush; her bosom heaved with tumultuous emotion; her whole frame trembled with agitation.

Not a trace of this excitement was lost upon the two keen-sighted plotters, and they exchanged glances rapidly.

"Yes, yes, I had quite a curiosity to see you," Grahame continued; "and now that I do see you, I no longer wonder that Bub has been fascinated by your beauty."

"He would have been more than mortal to have resisted such charms, by Jove!" the general echoed.

"You are speaking in riddles, gentlemen!" the girl exclaimed, in confusion.

"Oh, it is no use for you to attempt to deny it!"

"Oh, no, not the slightest use, dear girl."

"You know very well that Bub is your devoted admirer."

"Adores the very ground you walk on, in point of fact!"

"Oh, gentlemen, you are jesting with me!" and she was terribly agitated.

"We wouldn't be guilty of such a thing!"

"A thousand dollars would be no temptation for us to beset you!" the general protested, gallantly.

The girl shook her head. "I am no child," she said; "no silly girl, to allow my head to be turned by a few flattering words. Your cousin is a very wealthy gentleman, while I am only a poor girl—"

"You forget the deathless fame which you have already gained!" interrupted the general.

"Genius is always a match for wealth," Grahame added.

Again the girl shook her head.

"Ah, gentlemen, you are pleased to flatter me! Great as is my fame, powerful as is my genius, yet my parents, who are only poor, plain and unlettered people, would not touch a penny of my earnings if they knew how I gained my money."

"Ah, that's the old-time prejudice!" was Grahame's answer. "The world has grown much wiser and much more liberal in the last twenty years; your parents are relics of a bygone age; Bub, on the contrary, is a man of to-day. Already he admires you, knowing you only in your present character of innkeeper's daughter, a simple country maid; how much more strongly, then, will you impress him when he discovers that you are a genius at whose feet the great ones of the world are delighted to kneel!"

"He will be transported with admiration, of course!" the general cried, enthusiastically. "I know him like a book, dear girl! I would willingly bet a thousand dollars to a two-cent orange that immediately after he makes the discovery he will place his hand and fortune at your feet!"

Again the quick, vivid blush swept over the pale face of the maid. It was quite plain that the flattery was delicious to her ears, but her sober common sense rebelled against it.

"You are making a jest of me, gentlemen!" and she betrayed her impatience; "and I pray you to forbear. The subject is distasteful to me. One favor I crave at your hands—keep my secret; do not breathe a word to any one that you have ever met me before, and, least of all, under another name and in another walk of life."

"You may rely upon our discretion!" Grahame replied, with an appearance of great frankness.

"Oh, yes, dear girl, your secret will be perfectly safe in our hands. As my esteemed friend here has remarked, you may rely upon our discretion."

"Not that I care for any one in the world except my parents, but from their peculiar ideas the discovery that I earned money in a public capacity would surely be a most terrible blow."

"But are they not likely by some accident to discover the truth?" Grahame asked.

"It is not at all probable," she replied.

"There is not gold enough in the world to tempt my parents to set foot within any place of amusement; they live rigidly up to the rules of their church."

"I perceive that there is very little danger. Well, we will not betray you; make your mind easy upon that point; and since we must look upon you as being simply the innkeeper's daughter, will you have the kindness to bring us a little ginger ale?"

"Which will be transformed into nectar when served by such a Hebe as yourself!" cried the general, with a gallant bow.

"Certainly, at once," and the girl hurried away, not sorry to bring the rather unpleasant interview to a termination.

"Well, what's your plan, dear boy?" asked the old man, the moment that the girl was out of earshot.

"Really, you are too much for me at present, general," Grahame confessed. "I do not think there is any doubt that I can use the girl to immense advantage now that I know her secret, but the exact use I shall make of her I can't very well explain at present, for in my own mind I am uncertain."

"By Jove, dear boy, do you know that I think the girl looks better in this plain, rustic garb that she now wears than when adorned with silks and satins, blazing with costly gems, 'fit for an emperor's ransom,' and with her flowing locks bleached like an English blonde?"

"Hush! here she is."

The girl returned with the ale, securely cased in little bottles, placed two clean tumblers upon the table before the two gentlemen, and then, with a dextrous and practiced hand, decanted the beverage.

"Aha!" chuckled the general, "if I were to tell about this in New York, the world would never believe it. You are a most accomplished bar-maid!"

Grahame tossed a silver quarter upon the table.

"Never mind the change," he said, laughing; "that's the usual sort of thing, I believe."

The girl laughed in return, dropped a courtesy, said "Thank you!" and then retreated into the house.

Grahame watched her with sparkling eyes.

"You are right, general," he answered; "this plain attire does become her wonderfully. It is not at all strange that Bub, who has always been an extremely soft-hearted fellow where women are concerned, should take a fancy to this girl; but before I can commence to scheme to turn the affair to my advantage I must find out exactly how the matter stands."

"And that will be a difficult job, I take it."

"Oh, no, I see that you don't know my cousin as well as I do. He is as frank and open-hearted with me as a child. The very next time I meet him I shall turn the conversation upon this girl, and I'll bet you what you like that he will make a frank confession."

"And when do you intend to see him again?"

"This very night."

"So soon?"

"Yes; there is no time to be lost; I must get the threads of the affair in my hands as soon as possible."

"Right, dear boy, right! There is nothing in this world like striking when the iron is hot."

"Well, finish your tippie and let's be off. We must select a head-quarters. I know of a nice, quiet house, right off of Harvard square where we can get a furnished room and where the people attend to their own business and we will be free to come and go without being spied upon. It will be no easy job, this task that we have taken upon ourselves, but it can be, and must be accomplished. The Harvard crew must lose this race, and when the sun goes down that day at New London, you and I, old fellow, must be sundry thousands of dollars ahead."

"That will suit me exactly," the old sport admitted.

Then the two rose and strolled out of the garden; but leaving them to pursue their way to the square, we will follow the footsteps of the stroke-oar of the Harvard crew.

After parting with Grahame in the garden Bub joined a party of the students who were waiting for him at the gate and they sauntered off together.

At the square the company separated, Bub and a companion striking off to the north, taking the road leading by the lower end of the Fresh pond.

And as the companion of "Harvard's winning oar," as Bub was commonly termed, from his success in single contests with the "spruces," will play quite a prominent part in our narrative, we will describe him.

Richard Randolph Peyton he was called—a Virginian by birth, and as his name would indicate to any one familiar with the Mother State, a descendant of two of the best-blooded families that all the Southern land can boast of.

But by his college chums Peyton was rarely honored by his own name: Dicky Dolph he was usually called.

In stature he was a pocket-edition of a man, very boyish in appearance, slightly-built, but as neat and dapper a gentleman as one could well find in all this big world.

Peyton was the coxswain, the steersman, of the Harvard crew, for, after the English fashion, the race with Yale was to be rowed with eight oars and a coxswain.

A very warm friendship indeed existed between Peyton and Bub. They boarded at the same house, and rumor whispered quite shrewdly that Dicky was not only a great friend of the stroke-oar, but that he was also an admirer of the pretty Helena Lawrence, Bub's sister.

Of course Bub had been joked upon the subject, but he had always replied, just as he had replied to Grahame's remark upon the matter, that Peyton was only a boy; but, as well as any one living, Lawrence knew what an honorable, manly heart beat within the breast of the young Virginian, and that, although he had not yet reached his twentieth year, he was far more of a man than many of the student lads of Harvard who could boast of riper years.

A "right" handsome fellow Peyton was, too, to use the common Virginian expression, with his jet-black eyes, ebony locks curling tight to his head and frank, expressive face.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRAMP.

THE two friends strolled on together for quite a little while without exchanging a word, and then Peyton suddenly began the conversation.

"Bub, I've got something particular that I wish to say to you," he said, abruptly.

The stroke-oar looked rather astonished at this somewhat peculiar beginning, and from the tone, too, in which Peyton spoke, he quickly jumped to the conclusion that his friend felt embarrassed.

"What is it? Go ahead!"

"Well, it's a rather delicate subject."

"Yes?"

"And there is a lady in the case."

"Oh," and Bub looked just a trifle annoyed.

"It's about this girl, Kitty."

"Well, what of her?" the stroke-oar asked, avoiding the gaze of his friend and looking with a fixed glance straight before him.

"Isn't there a flirtation going on between you and her?"

The question was plumply put and yet Lawrence, usually the most straightforward of men, evaded it.

"A flirtation—why should you think so?"

"Oh, come, Bub! you know that there is!"

"Suppose there is, whose business is it?" replied Lawrence, just a little sharply.

"That's a very natural question under the circumstances," Peyton returned, quietly, both face and tone grave, "and I am perfectly well aware that, as a general rule, such an affair is nobody's business but the principals'; but, Bub, you and I are friends I believe."

"No doubt about that!" the stroke-oar exclaimed, heartily.

"Well, Lawrence, wouldn't it be a friendly act for me if I saw you walking into a gulf to extend my hand and endeavor to restrain your footsteps?"

"Oh, you look at it in that light, eh?"

"Yes, I do."

"Well, I'll own, frankly, that, in a measure, I am infatuated with the girl."

"And yet, Bub, isn't there a love affair between you and Winifred, the doctor's daughter?"

A dark look came over the face of the stroke-oar, and his strong, brown hands clenched nervously.

"And you love her, don't you?" Peyton continued, finding that Bub did not reply.

"Love her!" cried Lawrence, abruptly; "yes, better than I do anything else in this world!"

"And yet you confess that you are infatuated with this other girl."

"Yes, it is the truth. I know that I am acting like a weak fool in the matter, and I am really ashamed of myself. Winifred is an angel, and as such I love her; but when I am in the presence of this other girl she exerts an influence over me that I cannot account for."

"She fascinates you, in fact," Peyton suggested.

"Yes, fascinates; that is the word. When I am away from her the charm loses its power, but when I am with her, then, in some mysterious manner—I confess I cannot explain it—the memory of Winifred seems to fade away and I am ready to throw myself at the feet of this woman and swear to her that she is the only girl whom I have ever really and truly loved."

"It is a fascination indeed," Peyton remarked, "and as I have been watching the growth and development of it for some time, I took advantage of the friendship which exists between us to speak to you in regard to the matter, just as I should consider it my duty to warn you if you should suddenly take to drink and I should see that you were rapidly going to the bad. I know, of course, that the chances are a hundred to one that you will be offended, but as your friend it is my duty to speak; honor leaves no other course open to me."

Lawrence silently extended his hand and gave the Virginian's palm a hearty gripe, but he spoke not.

"You are not offended then, old fellow?" Peyton queried, anxiously.

"Oh, no; why should I be?"

"And I am not the only one, you know, who has noticed that you and the girl are extremely intimate."

A frown gathered upon Lawrence's generally clear and open face.

"So, the gossips have troubled their heads about us, eh?"

"Yes."

"And what do they say?"

"That you mean the girl no good," replied Peyton, firmly; and as the words fell upon the ears of the stroke-oar he started as though he had trodden upon a crested serpent coiled in the path.

"Oh, they say that, do they?" he cried, impulsively, in a low, deep tone, and his strong, brown hands involuntarily doubled themselves up.

"What else can they say, Bub?" Peyton remarked. "What else can they imagine? Consider your own position and then look at hers! You come of one of the old Boston families—the last male descendant of a line which has always prided itself upon its blue blood and the purity of its connections, and this girl—what is she?"

"The daughter of the keeper of an English ale-house," Bub answered, bitterly. "A girl whom my mother would hardly have considered fit to tie the laces of her shoes."

"And Helena," asked Peyton, "how would she regard this girl?"

Bub shook his head dismally.

"You don't think that she would gladly welcome her as a sister?"

"Not at first; she would be horrified at the very idea; the fact that she was the daughter of old Googage, and waited upon the guests who sought refreshment at her father's inn, would be quite enough for Helena."

"But in time, if she came to the conclusion

that she was really a lady at heart, despite her low position, you think that she might be reconciled to the idea?"

"Yes, perhaps; but I am afraid that it would take a very long time, though."

"And now, Bub, do you wonder that people speak ill of you and the girl when they notice how intimate you are with her—when, according to your own statement, your sister, whose idol you are, who looks up to you as being the best and wisest of men, would look with horror upon the prospect of your union with this girl?"

"You are right—right!" Bub exclaimed, "and I have acted like an infernal idiot in the matter; worse than an idiot, almost like a villain; although, Peyton, I trust that you will believe me when I say that I have meant the girl no wrong. She fascinated me, and I have enjoyed the pleasure of her society without reflecting upon the consequences."

"Oh, I fully believe you; but now that your eyes are open, I trust that you will avoid the snares of this enchantress. A man like you, Bub, blessed with the love of such a perfect girl as Winny, ought not to seek strange gods."

"I will not! In the future I will avoid the presence of this siren," and Lawrence spoke with marked decision.

"By the way, wasn't that your cousin, Graham, that I saw you talking with?" the Virginian asked.

"Yes; Harrison is a deuced good fellow, although he has his faults, but he's not in your good books, though, I believe?"

Peyton flushed up slightly, and the stroke-oar laughed as he noticed it.

"Well, to tell the honest truth, I don't like your cousin; not for the reason, though, that you may imagine. My dislike for him has nothing to do with Helena. I don't like the man; I don't trust him; I don't believe that he is any friend of yours, either, Bub, although you have such great faith in him."

"By Jove! old fellow, you're giving it to me right and left to-day!" the stroke-oar exclaimed.

"First you attack the lady of my adoration, and then you demolish the friend of my childhood. With the unhappy French king I must exclaim: 'Leave me something to love!'"

"Oh, I'm not so bad as all that!"

"By the way, have you any idea where we are going?"

"Not the slightest. I presumed that you had come this way merely for the sake of the walk."

"Well, then, there's a treat in store for you!" Bub announced, gayly. "Helena and Winny are out for a walk, and we will intercept them on their way home."

The look of delight upon the pleasant face of the Virginian showed how the information was appreciated.

Leaving the two friends to pursue their way, let us proceed at once to the willow-skirted road running by the lower end of Fresh pond, along which the two ladies referred to by the stroke-oar were walking.

The two had been for quite a long stroll, and now, with their hands full of captured treasures, wild-flowers and leaves, were proceeding homeward—two as pretty girls as all New England could boast, and that is saying a great deal, were the friends, Helena Lawrence, Bub's sister, and Winny Peabody, the old doctor's daughter.

There was quite a contrast between the two, for Helena was tall and stately in carriage, a pure blonde, with glorious blue eyes; Winifred, on the contrary, was rather petite in size, with soft brown hair, violet eyes, and a shy, fawn-like expression.

The one impressed you at the first glance; the other won upon you gradually.

The two had just descended the slight hill beyond the pond, and had entered upon the low ground where the willows, cut back, and thus transformed into pollards, to use the English term, grew extremely dense, completely shading the road.

As the two ladies entered upon the gloomy way, almost unconsciously they slackened their pace and glanced nervously around them.

"How very gloomy," Helena remarked.

"Yes; very lonesome, too."

"Just the spot for an evil-minded rogue to lay in wait for unsuspecting travelers, eh?"

"Oh, don't, Helena; you make me nervous!" and Winny gave a little shiver of alarm.

"But, luckily, there isn't any danger of such a thing in this neighborhood."

Hardly had the words left her lips, when out from the willows stepped a rather undersized, unsavory-looking, middle-aged fellow, dressed roughly and with a huge stick under his arm, and planting himself in the very center of the road, he grinned at the startled ladies.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MODEST REQUEST.

THE two ladies were terribly startled by the sudden appearance of the man; and no wonder, for he was a rank specimen of the genus tramp as one would be apt to meet during a long day's journey amid the slums of a big city.

A little below the medium size, but broad-shouldered and stockily built, it was evident

that he would prove a troublesome customer if his courage was equal to his muscle.

There was a sort of hang-dog look about the fellow; his chin was unshaven, his face discolored and scarred, and he wore the close, tight-fitting cap common to English costermongers or street-peddlers.

Fine types of these fellows can always be found in any of our large seaboard cities, and all imported articles, too, for as yet our country is too young to produce the breed.

He ducked his head and tried to assume a pathetic expression.

"Dontee be afeared, ladies," he whined; "I'm only a poor cove, a-tryin' to get a honest livin'; I'm a dorg-fancier, I am; don't you want to buy a dorg?" and then from one of the huge pockets of the overcoat-like garment which he wore—it could not with justice be termed an overcoat, as the owner wore no coat under it—he produced a diminutive black-and-tan terrier, a most unhappy and miserable-looking little beast, as all these unnaturally stunted dogs generally are.

He held the dog up for the ladies' inspection.

"Jest you look at that 'ere dorg!" he exclaimed. "There ar'n't a dorg in this blessed country that can compare with this here animal, although I says it wot shouldn't; I'm the most truthfulest man that ever stepped; I couldn't lie to save me! This here dorg is a beauty—a rale beauty, and if I wasn't down on my luck I wouldn't part with him for his weight in diamonds; but I'm in hard lines, ladies, and I've got for to make a raise some way, so I'll sell 'im cheap—twenty dollars, miss, for a puppy that is honestly worth a hundred every time! Rats! Bless you, miss, he don't make no more account of a rat than I would of a 'skeeter; he jest nips 'em in the small of the back and settles 'em at a single crack! Twenty dollars, ladies, for a dorg wot a hundred wouldn't buy if I hadn't bin misfortunate at my business and a-reduced to want through no fault of mine, at all."

The fellow stood right in the center of the road and completely blocked the way.

There was cause for alarm on the part of the girls, for, although the fellow spoke civilly enough, yet there was a wicked look in his eyes—a certain leer about his mouth—a peculiar swagger in his bearing, which betrayed that he considered the two ladies to be at his mercy.

It was a lonely road, no one in sight in either direction, some little distance to the nearest house, too, while the dense willow trees completely shielded the spot from observation.

Helena was naturally the bravest of the two, for Winny was of a shrinking, timid, fawn-like nature—one of those gentle, loving girls, who do not seem fitted to endure the rough blasts of this world; so Miss Lawrence took it upon herself to speak:

"No, sir; we do not wish any dog!" decidedly.

"But, 'e's dirt cheap, marm," the tramp persisted, "and 'e's clean grit too—game to the backbone! Look 'er here!" and then the wretch took the puppy by the tail and dangled him in the air, a proceeding which the unfortunate animal submitted to without wincing.

"Oh, stop, you horrid creature!" cried Helena, shocked at the cruelty of the action.

"Please don't hurt the little dog, sir!" Winny pleaded, earnestly, tears standing in her soft, violet eyes.

"Oh, bless yer, 'e don't mind it; it's mother's milk to 'im, you know!" the tramp replied, but obeying the request of the girls and removing the puppy from the uncomfortable position. "You had better buy him, one on you; you'll never 'ave sich a chance ag'in."

"We're very much obliged to you, but we don't care to purchase any dogs, and will you please stand aside so that we can go on?"

"Who's a-hindering yer, I'd like to know?" the fellow retorted, impudently. "Ain't the road wide enough for all on us, without you axing a poor beggar like me for to git out of the way? And you ain't going, I 'opes, without leaving me a trifle to remember you by, seeing as how you won't buy this here dorg which would be dirt cheap at double the money?" And then the tramp replaced the puppy in his pocket and leered impudently into the faces of the two ladies.

It was an ugly situation, and as the easiest way to get out of it both of the girls came to the conclusion that it would be better to give the fellow a small sum and so get rid of him, and so at once their hands sought their pocket-books, a proceeding which was viewed with unbounded satisfaction by the vagrant.

"That's right, ladies!" he cried, in glee; "give a poor cove a lift up on the hill of life! You'll never miss it, two rich female nob's as you are!"

The pocketbooks were produced and then, oh, horror! the ladies discovered that neither one of them possessed a single coin; the books were empty!

The quick eyes of the tramp made this discovery almost as soon as the girls did, and an ugly look came over his hard features.

"Well, blow me tight! if this here ain't a rum go!" he muttered. "Neither one of you has got enough to buy a poor man a pint of beer, and to

look at yer fixings one would be ready to take his oath that you could stand a basket of champagne if you had a mind to!"

"We really haven't anything, sir!" Helena exclaimed, annoyed and yet alarmed at the threatening manner of the man.

"And to think of my wasting my time a-tryin' to sell you that valuable dorg!" the fellow cried. "Ain't you kind of ashamed of yourselves to go gadding about the country with all this fine harness on, jest as if you had an interest in the Bank of England, and yet not even to have the price of a drink of beer in your pockets? to go and h'iste up the feelin's of gratitude in this here bosom of mine with a-thinkin' that I was going to make a stake out of ye, and then to go back on me in this here awful way?" and the vagabond shook his head, mournfully. Then, suddenly, his keen little eyes caught sight of a five-dollar gold piece which Winifred wore attached to her watch-chain.

"Whatever is that?" he cried, in pretended astonishment. "If my eyes don't deceive me it's a jolly good bit of stuff, but mebbe it ain't the real thing."

"Oh, you mustn't take that, sir!" Helena exclaimed, in alarm; "it's a gift to this lady, and she prizes it very highly!"

"And who is a-going to take it?" he almost shouted, indignantly. "It's a blooming shame if you are a-going to take me for a highway robber, right to onst! May I be jiggered if it ain't a five-dollar piece though! Now, miss seeing as how I'm so hard up—I ain't had a good square meal for three days—if you war to just lend me that little bit of stuff for a few days—jest for about a week, you know; I wouldn't spend it, but jest make a raise on it, and then when I get my remittances from 'ome, across the waters, you know, I'm one of the bleeding aristocracy, you bet, why then I'd bring it back to you. Jest think, miss, you might save a poor man like me from starvation. In course I could take and rip it right off of you, and hit yer a smashin' blow in the face, maybe, that would spile that beautiful nose of yours," and the ruffian doubled up his fist and shook it menacingly at the alarmed girls, who clung to each other in terror, "cos thar ain't anybody around to interfere, for this is a werry lonely place, but I ain't that kind o' man; I wouldn't do that, not unless you provokes me to it, 'cos I'm jest as gentle as a kitten, when I ain't crossed and everything goes jest as I want it to. So, miss, if you're willing for to lend it to me for to keep me from starving or from a-cuttin' somebody's throat, why, in course, I'll take it, and I'll call down 'eaven's blessing on your head, so I will! You'll lend it to me, won't yer? Yer wouldn't drive a poor cove to despair and make him do something which he might be sorry for ever afterwards?"

And as he finished his speech the man came a step nearer to the girls and extended his hand, almost clutching the gold-piece.

"Yes, yes, take it!" cried Winifred, terribly alarmed, and endeavoring, with trembling hands, to unfasten the gold-piece.

"Sha'n't I help you, marm?" the tramp asked, with elaborate politeness. "Sha'n't I take it off? Those beautiful white fingers of yours will never be able to do it."

"Yes, yes, take and welcome," the girl stammered, so thoroughly affrighted that she would have paid almost any price to have gotten rid of the ruffian.

A single twist of the tramp's fingers and he snapped the gold-piece from the chain.

"I'm only a-borrowin' of it, you know," he said, as he marched around the ladies and ducked his head in what was intended to be a grateful bow. "I couldn't think of keepin' it, you know. Inside of a week I'll give it back to you. I'll find out where you live, and I'll bring it to you. Don't you be alarmed about it! It will be jest as safe as though you had it yourself, bless your sweet little heart! Good-day, ladies, I'm jest awfully grateful, I am. Ta, ta!" and then, turning his back upon the town, he marched off up the road toward the brick-works, and soon disappeared around the bend of the road.

"The horrid wretch!" Helena cried, "I do believe that he would have taken it by force if you hadn't given it to him, but what will Bub say?"

The five-dollar gold-piece was the stroke-oar's gift to Winifred.

CHAPTER IX.

A BATTLE ROYAL.

"OH, I don't know; I expect that he will be terribly angry," the other replied, in a helpless sort of way, "but I don't see how I could very well have avoided parting with it."

"The wretch was determined to have it; how very unlucky that we should have come out without any change in our pocket-books!"

"Yes; I will never do so again."

"But perhaps he would have insisted upon having the gold-piece anyway?" Helena suggested.

"It is very likely."

"Let us hurry along home; I don't know what on earth to say to Bub, there'll be a dreadful time!"

"Yes, I suppose so. I hope that he won't

blame me, for I couldn't help it, could I, Helena?"

"No, you poor little puss, of course you couldn't. Why, the fellow frightened me, and I am not easily frightened; but let us hurry along, for he might take it into his head to come back."

They acted upon the suggestion at once, but they had hardly turned the slight bend in the road when they came face to face with Lawrence and Peyton.

Bub's keen eyes noticed the traces of agitation so plainly apparent upon Winifred's face, and his anxiety was at once aroused.

"Why, what's the matter, Winny? You are as pale as a ghost," he exclaimed.

"Oh, a horrid man, Bud!" Helena explained—"a tramp—just gone up toward the railroad."

"And did he trouble you?"

"I should think he did!" and Helena proceeded to relate all that had happened.

"Then, when he insisted upon the gold-piece, you gave it to him?" asked Otis, when she had finished.

"Yes; and, Otis, don't be angry! He really was a terrible creature!"

"Oh, I don't blame you. Peyton, you attend to the ladies. I'm off for that man and that money!"

"Be careful, Bub; he's an ugly fellow!" warned Peyton; but the stroke-oar only laughed and hurried up the road.

Five minutes' brisk walk brought Lawrence in sight of the tramp, who was leisurely strolling along.

Bub quickened his pace, but took particular care to walk quietly, so as not to excite the attention of the fellow, and so successful was he in this that he got within ten yards of the man before the tramp was aware of his presence.

And then, the moment that the fellow turned his head, Bub accosted him:

"Hallo, you fellow; I want that five-dollar gold-piece!"

"Wot five-dollar gold-piece?" replied the tramp, defiantly, turning squarely around so as to face the young man, as if he fully realized that flight was impossible and that he must face it out.

"The gold-piece you took from that young lady down in the hollow," said Bub, advancing to within easy "reaching" distance of the fellow.

The man took a good survey of the stroke-oar before he made reply, and an excellent judge of the human form divine was this same unsavory tramp, as far as muscular force and action were concerned. In his time, in merrie England, he had assisted at many a prize-ring encounter upon the green sward, and was reputed to be a tolerably good judge in that sort of thing. And now, as he took stock of this young man, who apparently "meant business," he fully comprehended that if the new-comer knew anything of the "noble art" of self-defense, he would turn out to be a pretty tough customer to handle, and although he was "an ugly one" with the fists himself, yet the young man had the advantage in size, weight, length of reach, and, above all, in the freshness which youth alone can give. And so, as he couldn't run, and concluded that he had better not risk a fight, there was nothing to be done but to lie out of it.

"So help me!" he cried, "I don't know nothing 'bout no gold-piece! You've picked up the wrong chicken, young feller. I guess you're arter a stout-built chap, werry roughly rigged, that jest run up the road a minute ago. He was a-hurrying along as if somebody was after him, and I sed to myself, sed I, when he went by, 'Old chap, you ain't be'n up to no good!'"

"No nonsense, you rogue," Bub cried, sharply; "I've no time to waste with you. Hand over that gold-piece!"

"Don't you believe a cove when he tells you that he ain't the chap?" the tramp growled in a sullen tone.

"Of course I don't believe you, you vagabond!"

"Well, I ain't the man and I ain't got no time to stand talking here with you; I've got a business ap'intment up yonder, so I'll jest toddle along," the tramp said, in a sulky way, pretending to turn but at the same time being careful to keep his face toward the young man—not to be taken by surprise if he knew it."

"You hand out that gold-piece and then you can toddle just as soon as you like!" Bub cried, sternly.

"I guess you won't stop me from going!" the man replied, insolently. "Who be you? an' wot's yer authority, anyhow?"

"This is my authority," the stroke-oar replied, and he held up a big brown fist which looked to be as hard as iron.

"Oh, two can play at that game, my nibs!" the tramp cried, throwing himself with the ease of a practiced boxer into a defensive position. "And now, as a friend I warn you, don't you aggravate me, 'cos I'm an ugly man when I get a-goin'; I'm jest as gentle as a kitten when I ain't crossed, but if I'm aggravated, why, I'm a bad lot! You don't know me, young cove. Old Greenbacks they call me on the road; but when I was a Birmingham boy at 'ome, there

wasn't many of the kids wot could put up their dooks with Jerry Mulligan, and that's me! Did you ever hear of Tom Sayers?—well, I'd 'ad the gloves on 'im. Wot do you think of that?" and the tramp cut a caper as he spoke.

"For the last time I ask you for that gold-piece!" the stroke-oar cried, a dangerous light in his eyes.

"Oh, you go to blazes! and that's the kind of man I am!"

The strong right arm shot forth, aimed full at the head of the tramp; up went the arms of the man to ward off the apparently powerful blow; but it was only a feint, for, quick as a flash, the left fist shot out, and taking the tramp on the unguarded chest, just over the heart, floored him as if he had been shot.

It was an awful downfall. The concussion with the earth as well as the effect of the powerful blow knocked the wind out of the man and for a minute or so he lay flat on his back, gasping for breath, and then he rose slowly to his feet, pretty well shaken up.

"Have you got enough, or do you want another tap before you give up the gold-piece?" Bub demanded.

"I ain't throwed up the sponge yet," Old Greenbacks growled, and then with a careful guard he approached the stroke-oar, thirsting for revenge.

"You fool, you are determined to make me hurt you!" Bub exclaimed.

For reply the tramp aimed a wicked blow at Bub's head; but the long arms of the student easily brushed the stroke aside and then again the terrible left fist struck the fellow a stunning blow; this time right between the eyes, and again he went over, headlong.

This stroke settled the matter; the fight was all taken out of the man, and as soon as he recovered sufficiently to sit up he took the gold-piece out of his pocket and flung it at the student.

"Take the blasted thing!" he cried. "I wouldn't stand up ag'in' you ag'in for a hundred of 'em!"

Bub picked up the coin and strode away with hardly a glance at the conquered man.

CHAPTER X.

THE AVOWAL.

THE stroke-oar returned at once to the ladies, who, escorted by Peyton, were walking slowly toward the town.

The battle with the tramp had really not occupied as much time as has been required for the narration of the incident.

After Bub's abrupt departure the girls had expressed some little anxiety in regard to the issue of the interview, but the Virginian had laughed at their fears.

"Don't be alarmed, ladies! Bub will get back the token, and I would be willing to wager a trifle that he doesn't have much trouble about the matter, either."

"I hope so; but the tramp is a wicked fellow," Helena observed.

"Yes, a perfect wretch!" assented Winny.

"Your brother, Miss Helena, has a very convincing way with him sometimes," Peyton observed, lightly.

And the girls, never dreaming of the double meaning that there was to the sentence, accepted the speech literally. No doubt Bub would be able to persuade the man to return the gold-piece—give him a trifle maybe to induce him to give it up.

Hardly five minutes had elapsed after Lawrence's departure ere he came striding along the road again.

"Here's your gold-piece, Winny!" Bub said, as he came up to the party, and he proceeded to fasten it onto the chain again, a grateful look showing the while in the soft, violet eyes of the girl.

"Did you have much trouble with the man?" Helena asked.

"Oh, no, not much."

"He was inclined to listen to reason, then?" Peyton observed.

"Yes, the first argument didn't fetch him, but the second did," Bub replied, dryly, pretending to be still busily engaged in fastening the coin to the chain.

"Well, he didn't seem to me to be the kind of man that you could argue with at all," Helena remarked, innocently.

"Appearances are deceptive. Some of these fellows that tramp about are regular lawyers," Peyton said, with a perfectly grave face, humoring the joke, although he understood as well as though he had witnessed the affair that Bub had not obtained the coin until he had thrashed the ruffian soundly.

"Go on; don't wait; I'll have it fixed in a minute," Bub remarked, still pretending to be busy attaching the coin to the chain; this was a sly device on his part to obtain a *tete-a-tete* with Winifred.

And Peyton, being equally as desirous on his part to enjoy the pleasure of Miss Helena's society, lost no time in presenting his arm to her, and they strolled off in the direction of the town.

Bub waited until they had got a couple of hundred yards off, then declared that the gold-

piece was securely attached to the chain, presented his arm to the blushing girl, and they followed in the footsteps of the others.

Since the brief conversation that Bub had had with Peyton in regard to the two loves struggling within his heart he had reflected soberly and seriously.

As he had honestly confessed, the pretty daughter of the English ale-house keeper had fascinated him, but a marriage with her was utterly out of the question; such a thing could not be thought of seriously, for a single moment. There was only one way to crush the foolish fancy, and that was to bind himself firmly and finally to Winifred. He was certain that he loved her as well as he could love any woman, and when he had once pledged himself to her he was confident that she would act as a guardian angel and keep him from the spells that the dark-haired siren was striving to weave around him.

He had faith enough in himself to believe that if he plighted his word to one woman no other creature of the female kind would have power over him.

For a few minutes the pair walked on in silence—the girl perfectly happy in the society of the man she fairly idolized, and Bub meditating how to commence operations, for the ticklish moment having arrived he began to realize that he had taken upon himself no easy job.

"I am very glad indeed that I happened to come up when I did," he began, "for if you had lost my keepsake I should have regarded it as a bad omen."

"Oh, yes; it would have been dreadful," the girl replied, simply, never having the slightest suspicion of the important avowal toward which the young man was tending. She was not unconscious of Bub's love for her, but had never considered it in the serious light of marriage, and although Helena, once in awhile, used to joke with her in regard to the influence which she possessed over Bub, yet in her simple, girlish heart the idea that some day she might be the wife of Lawrence never came.

"I'm afraid that you don't set much value upon my little gift, or else you would not have parted with it so easily," he continued.

The girl looked horrified at the idea.

"Oh, Mr. Lawrence, you must not think that!" she replied, quickly, and in a very earnest tone. "The man terrified me so dreadfully that I hardly knew what I was doing."

"Oh, you silly little puss, did you think that I was in earnest?" he exclaimed, laughing. "Oh, no! I understand that you wouldn't part with my token if you could help yourself."

"Oh, no, I should be very sorry indeed to lose it," and the girl looked with her great mild eyes trustfully up into the face of the stroke-oar, unsuspecting of the declaration which was so rapidly approaching.

"And why would you be sorry?" Bub asked, his tone involuntarily deepening, and his manner growing more and more earnest; and now, as he looked into the sweet, mild eyes of the pretty maid, all remembrance of the fascinating siren, the dark-haired Kitty, vanished from his memory.

His liking for her was a delusion, due to the charms of a bewitching face, but his feeling for Winifred was pure and ardent love: so he reasoned.

The question confused the girl; she blushed, cast down her eyes, and hesitated.

"Why would I be sorry?" she answered. "What funny questions you ask! Wouldn't any one be sorry to lose anything that they prized, given by one they liked?"

"Then you do like me, Winny?"

The deep and earnest tone in which the question was put caused the heart of the girl to thrill as it had never done before; for the first time in her life she was fully conscious of a girl's first love.

"Like you—why, yes, of course," she replied, hesitatingly. Her woman's wit told her that it was no idle question, and while for certain reasons she feared the coming disclosure, yet not for worlds would she by word or deed have prevented it; the draught was too sweet—the pleasure too heavenly, although her sober common sense told her that the words had better be left unsaid.

"I'm glad of that, Winny," he said, very gravely, and yet with a tone full of tenderness—"very glad of it indeed; and I hope that in a very short time your liking will turn into a stronger feeling."

"A stronger feeling?" she repeated, mechanically, hardly knowing what she said.

"Yes; for, Winny, I not only like you, but I love you with all my heart and soul!"

"Oh, Otis!" she murmured, and great tears stood in her eyes.

It is not a fable that sometimes in this life we poor humans cry for joy.

"Yes, Winny, I love you, love you as well as a man can love a woman, and I want you to promise that one of these days you will become my wife."

"But, Otis!" the girl said, softly, as happy as happy could be, and yet, with all the perverseness of weak human nature, struggling against

her happiness, "I am only a poor girl, you know, while you are very rich, and I am sure that you might find some one much better suited to you than I am."

"Can I find any one that I will love any better, or any one who will try to make me happier than you will?" he asked, quickly.

The girl did not reply in words, but she lifted up her head and smiled at him through her tears.

It was a good and sufficient answer, and the heart of the student beat fast with joy.

"My own dear little girl!" he murmured; "all my future life shall be devoted to your happiness."

By this time the pair had reached the suburbs of the town, and as they walked on, unconscious of all else but love's delirious dream, around the corner of a side-street came a stately, portly figure face to face with them, and, suddenly roused from their abstraction, the pair looked up and saw the usually placid face of Doctor Peabody, now agast with surprise and horror.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DOCTOR SPEAKS.

THE doctor, in his astonishment, had halted right in front of them, and so, completely blocking the way, brought the twain to a standstill.

Winny crimsoned as red as a rose in conscious guilt; but Bub, with a defiant smile upon his face, drew the arm of the girl still tighter within his own and calmly faced the old gentleman.

"Good gracious! is it possible?" the doctor exclaimed, completely surprised by the unexpected meeting, the more so that for the first time he suspected the intimate relations which existed between the two young people.

Doctor Artemas Peabody was quite a character in his way; a very tall man, very portly in build, with his long, white hair brushed carefully back of his ears, his smoothly-shaven, florid face, large blue eyes, extremely mild and placid in their look, almost always hidden behind a pair of old-fashioned glasses, the doctor's constant companion for the last twenty years, his was a figure calculated to excite attention anywhere.

As a scholar the doctor stood high; few men in Cambridge, that renowned precinct of the all-learned "Hub," were better learned than he.

The doctor had been Bub's guardian ever since the death of his father, which event had taken place when Bub was but a child, and in fact had been much more of a parent to him than his real father ever was, for Otis had been too young at the time of his father's death to realize the extent of his loss.

The mother of the stroke-oar had died when he was only three years old, and of course of her he remembered nothing.

"Well, well," muttered the doctor, so utterly bewildered by the sudden and astounding discovery he had made that he was completely dumbfounded.

It was an awkward situation, but Bub with his usual cleverness thought of a way to get out of the dilemma.

It was quite plain to him that for the first time the old doctor had awakened to the consciousness that there was a love-affair between himself and Winny, and that the knowledge had utterly astounded him. An explanation must come some time, and as Bub was a firm believer in the old idea of taking the bull by the horns, he determined to settle matters at once.

"Winny, won't you excuse me for a few minutes, so that I can have some conversation with the doctor?" he said. "Run on and join Helena and Dick. The doctor and I will soon catch up with you."

"Certainly," responded the girl, not at all sorry to be released from the embarrassing situation.

The doctor and Bub, left alone together, surveyed each other for a few minutes in silence.

"Well, well!" the old gentleman murmured at last, with a solemn shake of the head.

"What is the matter, sir?" asked Bub, as cool as a cucumber.

"I am a stupid old donkey not to have mistrusted this before!" the doctor exclaimed, with another doleful shake of the head.

"Not to have mistrusted what, sir?"

"Oh, you know well enough, young man; I have been blind not to have seen that some such thing as this was almost certain to happen. It is all my own fault; I can hardly blame either of you, for it is only human nature. I am the one who should bear the blame."

"The blame of what, sir? Pray explain."

"Answer me a question first," said the old gentleman, quite abruptly. "What had you been saying to Winifred when I encountered you just now?"

"Sir, I will answer the question as frankly as it has been asked," the stroke-oar replied with perfect honesty. "I had been telling the young lady that I thought she was the dearest and best girl in this world, and that I loved her and should never be happy until she consented to become my wife."

The old gentleman fairly groaned aloud at this extremely frank avowal.

"How is this, sir? You don't seem to like it," Bub questioned.

In truth he was rather astonished at the dismay so plainly written upon the face of the doctor.

"Oh, it is sheer madness!" the old gentleman cried; "such a union cannot be!"

"Excuse me, doctor, but it *will* be!" Bub replied, firmly.

"Oh, no, my dear boy, you must not think of such a thing!" the doctor exclaimed, evidently laboring under deep excitement. "I know that you think you love her—"

"Think, sir!" Bub cried, indignantly.

"Yes, yes, I know; you feel sure that you love her and that you will never love any one else," the doctor continued, imposing silence with a wave of his hand. "That is the way we all are when youthful blood runs riot in our veins. I know how it is myself; but, you will get over it. I do not blame you; it was all my fault in bringing you together; I looked upon Winny as a child; I did not dream that she was going to turn into a woman so soon. I have been blind, but now I wake to a consciousness of my folly. But, my dear boy, you really must banish this idea from your head—for my sake you must."

"Doctor, it is impossible!"

"Yes, yes, I know that you think so now; but in time you will get over that idea."

"Doctor, I shall never get over it; and why do you make such a difficulty about the matter? What objection is there to my marriage with Winny?"

The agitation of the old gentleman visibly increased. He took his old-fashioned silk handkerchief from his pocket and mopped his face with it; the perspiration was streaming from every pore.

"My boy, why do you force me to an explanation?" he murmured, evidently suffering deeply. "Is it not enough that I tell you the union cannot be?"

"No, sir, it is *not* enough," Bub replied, respectfully, for he pitied the agitation of the old gentleman, and yet firmly, for his was not a nature to give up a cherished object without good and sufficient reasons. "This question concerns the happiness of my whole life, and unless you give me some good reason why I should not seek Winifred's hand in marriage, most assuredly I will persist in my suit."

"But just consider what a terrible situation you are placing me in!" the old gentleman cried; "I am your guardian; I have cared for you since you was a child; you are the heir to a large estate—a man of fortune and of family, and what is my daughter? Just think of it! what is she? the child of a penniless old man—of an obscure man who depends upon his daily toil that he may live; will not the world say that I—I your tutor—your guardian—deliberately plotted to entrap you into a marriage with my child that I might profit by your wealth? Yes, all the world will say it; all the world will believe it, and I, in my old age, will be covered with shame!"

The good man was laboring under strong excitement, but to Bub's experienced eyes it was plain that in some measure the agitation was forced.

"Ah, Doctor Peabody, you are not treating me honestly now!" his tone was one of reproach. "This is not the true reason why you object to my marriage with your daughter. There is something more than this. I know you too well to believe, even for a single instant, that you care two straws about the opinion of the world when your own heart acquits you of all wrongdoing. How often have I heard you rail at the vile and unjust verdicts that the world's juries often give? How often have I heard you say that the upright man kept on in the even tenor of his way, unmoved by the clamor of popular opinion, and that in the end justice would be done him? Doctor, for some reason you are deceiving me. This reason that you have given is not the true one."

"My dear boy, why should I deceive you?" the old gentleman plead, wringing his hands in anguish.

"I do not know, sir, but I feel confident in this matter that for some reason you are not treating me frankly; you are hiding something from me."

"No, no, you must not think so!" the old gentleman persisted.

"You will not satisfy my curiosity upon this point?"

"But, my dear boy, you must not think there is anything—I mean that you must not think that—" and then completely confused, his old guardian broke down and mopped his face with his handkerchief more vigorously than ever.

Bub regarded the doctor for a few minutes in silence, but from the look upon his features it was plain that he was not at all satisfied.

"You wish me to give up all idea of marrying Winny?" he said at last.

"Yes, yes; you *must* give it up."

"Simply because I am rich and she is poor?"

"Yes, yes."

"Well, doctor, I sha'n't do anything of the

sort!" Bub exclaimed, firmly. "I love Winny, and I think that she loves me, and I am determined to have her if it is possible!"

"But, it is not possible, my dear boy; you don't know the obstacles—the shameful secret—but there, you are forcing me to utter words which I have no business to speak!"

The old gentleman was now more agitated than ever, and Bub really sympathized with him, although he was utterly unable to comprehend the reason.

"But then, for the present, let us say no more about the matter," the doctor continued. "I will take an early opportunity to question Winifred and ascertain exactly what her feelings are in this matter; and now let us go home."

Side by side the two proceeded, Bub puzzled and the doctor distressed.

CHAPTER XII.

A FAMILY COUNCIL.

THE sunset hour had come, and the innkeeper, old Googage, with his better-half, Mrs. Mary Ann Googage, a stout, well-preserved, motherly-looking woman, having finished their tea, sat under the shadows of the cherry trees in the little front garden of the ale-house.

It was too early yet for customers, for the college boys rarely honored the "Woodbine" with their presence until the shades of night had covered in the earth.

The old man was smoking a pipe and the good dame was busy with her knitting, while from the kitchen at the rear of the house came the clatter of dishes, and ever and anon the clear voice of the innkeeper's daughter warbled a bit of song as melodiously as a bird.

"I tell 'ee, old woman, she's a rare 'un!" Googage exclaimed, taking the pipe out of his mouth for a moment, and nodding in the direction of the girl.

"Yes, she is, old man; she beats any canary that I ever heard," the dame replied, with conscious pride.

"And she's a beauty, too, although I say it that shouldn't, but it's the truth. I tell you what, wife, she can hold up her head with any on 'em, although, mebbe, she hasn't got sich fine togs as some of the gals in the big houses."

"Well, Ben, I'm sure our Kitty ailers dresses like a lady, and she looks like one, too, and she could dress herself a great deal better if she choosed—that is, I mean, she could wear richer and more costly clothes, but she don't seem to care for 'em."

"Mebbe she gives us too much of her money?" the innkeeper suggested. "I don't really know what would have become of us if it hadn't been for her. Jest to think of her a-starting out into the world all on her own hook and a-making enough wages for to help us hold on to this little place. Ah! in those days the Woodbine had a tough time of it, but now that I've got in with the college boys, we're beginning to prosper."

"And, speaking of the students," the old lady remarked, an anxious expression upon her face, "do you know that I'm afraid that it isn't a very good idea to let Kitty get acquainted with all these wild young men?"

"Why not?" asked Googage, almost gruffly.

"Well, old man, you know that boys are boys, and girls will be girls. Now they pay Kitty all sorts of compliments, enough to turn any girl's head, and—"

"What of it?" It was quite evident from the tone of the old man that he did not relish the remarks of his "partner for life."

"Well, you know it ain't likely that any one of these young gentlemen can have any serious intentions in regard to our girl," the old lady replied, "and I'm afraid that she'll get ideas in her head that won't do her any good."

"Why shouldn't any of 'em have any serious intentions, as you call 'em?" demanded the old man, forcibly.

"Now, don't get angry, Ben; you know I'm only speaking for the best. It ain't a likely thing, you know; they're all young gentlemen of property, and of good family, and all that sort of thing, while we're—"

"Well, what are we? Spit it out, old woman!" Googage exclaimed, sarcastically. "Bless my stars! if I didn't think that in this here country one man was jest as good as another, if not sometimes a little better, but if you go on, like you is a-going now, bless me! if you won't make out that we're regular tramps, all on us!"

Mr. Googage was evidently offended.

"Oh, I knows, Ben, that there ain't anybody in the world as has call to say a single word ag'in' us," she answered.

"Well, I should say not!" he blurted out; "and if anybody did, although I am a member of the church and a Christian man, I 'opes, I think that I would be apt to backslide for a few minutes and jest let 'em see the style in which I used to knock the coves around when I was a waterman on the Thames, in hold Hengland."

"Well, I knows, Ben, that we can 'old our 'eads up with anybody, for the matter of that—"

"I think we can!" puffing out a great cloud of smoke. "Don't I pay my taxes? Does any body find fault with me for keeping this

here little place? Was there ever a drunken man seen around here? Was there ever a quarrel in the Woodbine? Do any loafers come here at all? Not much! Here's one saloon in the city of Cambridge where you can't buy anything stronger than ale if a man was to offer its weight in gold, and the people know it, and a mug of good ale never hurt anybody yet; and now, wife, don't you go to running the family down. We've lived here ten years, and no man can say that I ever wronged a mortal out of a farthing, and now, just because you're afraid that some one of these young college chaps may take a fancy to our girl, you're a-going on and a-trying to make out that we ain't as good as anybody else. Why, old woman, our Kitty is a match for any man in the land, I don't care who he is! Why, the on of the President himself, and I think that he's one of the nob's, if there is any, might be proud to win such a lass. She'd be an honor to any man in the land, that's what I say!"

And having thus relieved his mind by this free and frank expression of his sentiments, the innkeeper again devoted his attention to his pipe, which had nearly gone out.

Mrs. Googage shook her head soberly for a moment.

"Ah, Ben, that's allers the way with you," she said. "You allers flies in a passion instead of listening to reason. Now, Ben, what I wants to say is this. I've noticed lately that this Mr. Lawrence and our Kitty have a good deal to say to each other."

"What of it?" exclaimed the old man, doggedly. "Mr. Lawrence is a gentleman; he won't do the girl no harm!"

"Nobody said that he would," the dame replied, just a little spitefully. "But, what is Mr. Lawrence, tell me that, please?"

"What is he? Why, he's as fine a gentleman as the Lord ever put on the earth; there ain't a square inch of meanness on his whole carcass!"

"He's a gentleman, isn't he?"

"Of course he is! What a question!"

"Awful rich, too?"

"Yes, s'pose so: I've heard that he is."

"And, Ben, do you think that he's a-going to marry our Kitty?" The old woman put the question plumply, and leaning forward looked the innkeeper square in the face.

"Dang it! who said that he would?" he cried, bringing his hand smartly down upon his knee.

"You say so when you let the flirtation go on and don't tell the girl to mind what she is about," the dame replied.

"There ain't a flirtation atween 'em!"

"Yes, there is! I've seen it! I'm not blind if you are."

"He might get a worse wife than our Kitty."

"Oh, no doubt about that!" the old lady exclaimed, with conscious pride. "She's good enough for a duke or a prince!"

"We don't 'ave 'em in this country, you know."

"Never mind; she be good enough for 'em if they was here. But now, Benjamin Googage, I jest want you to give your attention to this here subject. I don't want that girl to get any ideas in her head that ain't going to do her the least bit of good. If this here Mr. Lawrence, who is a perfect gentleman, as I knows well enough, means to marry Kitty, well and good—"

"And how do you know that he doesn't?" interrupted the old man, abruptly. "Kitty is a pretty girl—a ladylike girl and she had a good bringing up. She can sing like an angel, play on the piano—can talk with a college professor, and there ain't anybody that could meet her and tell without a knowing of her that she wasn't the daughter of one of the greatest nob's in the land."

"That's all true enough—there ain't anybody as could say that isn't true! but, Benjamin Googage, he don't mean it!" When the better-half of the innkeeper desired to be particularly impressive she always called him by his full name.

"How do you know that he don't?" The old man was obstinate. To tell the truth he had noticed the growing intimacy between Kitty and the stroke-car, and the wish was father to the thought that Lawrence would take a fancy to the girl, and, despite the difference in their positions, make her his wife.

"Oh, I know well enough," the dame replied, with a warning shake of the head. "What's the use of trying to blind ourselves with our own hands? The young gentleman is all well and honest enough. Kitty is a pretty girl, and she's a ladylike girl, and a good 'un, too; anybody can see that with half an eye; it's only natural that he should take a fancy to her; mebbe he does think that she'd do for a wife, but just wait till he lets on to his people and then see what a row there'll be!"

"He ain't got any!" Googage remarked, bluntly; "both his father and mother are dead."

"Well, then he's got uncles and aunts," persisted the dame, not at all put out by the intelligence. "And if he ain't got uncles and aunts, then he's got friends—nob's in his own walk of life, and a pretty time they'll make about it. You jest see! No doubt he means well enough, but when the pinch comes he'll back out, and

then what kind of a child should we have on our hands? Kitty would go crazy, I know!"

"Oh, bother, mother! You're allers borrowing trouble," the old man retorted, sulkily. He was annoyed at having his bright day-dream so rudely destroyed, and yet he could not help acknowledge—to himself, though, not to his wife—that there was reason in her words.

"Better borrow it afore than be troubled with it arterward," she replied, sagely, "but you jest talk to Kitty; jest drop a few words, you know."

"I sha'n't do anything of the sort," he returned, bluntly. "She'll be going back to her work in a few days now and that will end the matter, but I'll keep a look-out for her until then."

"Well, that will do; and now I will go in, for the dew is commencing to fall." Quite satisfied the dame withdrew into the house, leaving the old man to his reflections, which were anything but pleasant. These reflections were soon interrupted by a man who sauntered up to the fence and leaning on the pickets looked over at the innkeeper.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

THE innkeeper was not in a very good humor and therefore when he looked up and saw that the new-comer was a rough-looking fellow, with a dirty, unshaven face, and that his garments were much the worse for wear, he accosted him quite rudely:

"Well, what do you want?"

For tramps the sturdy Englishman had an inveterate dislike, for it was impossible to convince him that there wasn't work for every man in this world if he sought for it diligently and in the right way.

"How are you, boss?" responded the man, ducking his head, and affecting a jovial aspect; "have you got the price of a pint of beer in your pocket?"

At once, from the peculiar form of the man's speech as well as from his manner, the host concluded that the speaker was an old countryman, a discovery that immediately annoyed him, and if he had put the cause of his annoyance into words, he would have exclaimed:

"One of the blarsted hounds that has to cut and run from across the water, and comes over here to disgrace the country that had to kick him out!"

"Why don't you go to work and earn your beer?" Googage responded, in answer to the inquiry.

"And where's a man to git work when there ain't any?" demanded the tramp, for such he evidently was.

"I guess that all the hunting after work that you have ever done never hurt you much!" the innkeeper exclaimed, sarcastically.

"Well, wot sort of a man are you, anyway?" cried the tramp, his manner suddenly changing and becoming insolent. He had caught sight of the modest sign of the Woodbine Inn.

"You had better travel right along or mebbe you'll find out what kind of a man I am!" Googage cried, rising in wrath and shaking a brawny fist in the face of the tramp.

"Do you keep this here gin-shop?" queried the fellow, prudently retreating a step so as to get beyond the reach of the old man.

"Don't you call my place a gin-shop or I'll come out there and pound you, you loafer!" cried Googage, enraged.

"Well, you do sell gin, don't you?" the tramp retorted, defiantly, "and a precious nice article you are for to talk about work; you work, don't you? Oh, yes, a-selling of pison for to take away the brains of sich gent'l'men as I am!"

"Move on, move on!" Googage exclaimed: "you'll get nothing here but a thrashing!"

"Not a move, you old bloke!" responded the tramp, defiantly, "for I'm a-coming in for to patronize your establishment. 'I'm a good Samaritan, I am! I returns good for evil; you're hard-hearted enough to refuse a poor cove a glass of beer, so I'm going to buy it, jest like a nob!'"

"I don't want your custom! Your room is better than your company; you jest go and take your custom somewhere's else."

"Ain't my money good?"

"No, not here."

"And why not?"

"Never you mind; jest you tramp on, will you?"

"Well, blow me tight!" cried the fellow, abruptly; for the first time he had taken a good look at the innkeeper. "Well, I never! If it isn't! Who would have thought it! 'ang me if I ain't knocked all into a cocked hat!"

Googage looked at the tramp in astonishment.

"Oh, you don't know me, of course! When a man is down on his luck nobody knows him!"

"I never saw you before!" the innkeeper replied, quite roughly.

"Oh, no, of course not!" cried the tramp, with an air of lofty disdain. "I didn't leave England twenty odd years ago with a wife and a baby to seek my fortune in this here country jest because I appened to 'ave a dispute with a drunken cove in regard to a tickle; the bloke give me the what-a-bos I pulled him out of the river jest in

gratitude-like, and then, when he got sober, he went and lodged information ag'in' me and swore I robbed him of it, and so, as I didn't want to put ther perlice to any trouble, seeing as how I had sold the ticker, I emigrated. Oh, you don't know me, in course! Your name ain't Ben Googage, and I ain't your lawful cousin, Jerry Milligan?"

"Well, well, it ain't possible!" the innkeeper cried, in astonishment.

"Wish I may die if it ain't!"

"I thought that you were dead, long ago."

"Oh, no; I'm one of the kind that allers turns up like a bad penny."

"Well, you allers was a bad egg," Googage remarked, with a solemn shake of the head.

"Ah, that's the old cry!" Milligan exclaimed, indignantly; "give a dog a bad name and then hang him. I guess I ain't any worse than the rest of the world, only I happened to be found out; that's what's the matter!"

"Where's the wife and babby now?"

"Gone, both on 'em; much better off, too."

"Yes, I should say so," Googage observed, grimly. "Well, what you driving at? No good, I suppose."

"There now is jest where you're out; I'm no tramp, I ain't, although I have done my share in that line, but I'm here now on business."

"Business?" the innkeeper remarked, suspiciously, with a look at the seedy clothes of the other.

"Yes, sir; that's my game, and I reckon that I'm playing a lone hand for all it's worth, as a Western sharp would say."

"And what business might you have to attend to, I'd like to know?" It was plain that the old innkeeper did not have a very high opinion of his relative.

The tramp put his tongue into his cheek in a very knowing way, and then winked cunningly at Googage.

"Don't you be so curious, old man," he responded; "all I care to say at present about my business is that I'm going to make a ten-strike afore I'm four-and-twenty hours older."

"A ten-strike!" exclaimed Googage, dubious-ly.

"That's my leetle game; jest you mark it now, and then arter that operation is performed, I'll tog up a little. I ain't in jest the rig now to stop at a first-class hotel."

"No, I should think not."

"But now, I say, Ben, ain't you going to stand summat? A drop of beer and a bit of bread and cheese, and if yer too stingy to give it to yer own flesh, why, I guess I've got the blunt about me somewhere to pay you for it," Milligan said, half cringingly and half defiant-ly.

"Oh, come in, man; you're welcome to a bite of the best that there is in the house, for blood is thicker than water, although you are, and allers have been, a precious bad lot."

The tramp grinned; he regarded this remark as a sort of a compliment.

Googage opened the gate and the fellow came slouching in. The old man led the way to the kitchen, which was unoccupied, the mother and daughter having betaken themselves up-stairs.

The innkeeper set out a plate of cold meat, and some bread and cheese, before his visitor, and then went to the bar and drew him a mug of ale.

When he returned, he found that his long-absent relative had turned up the light upon the kitchen table, which the prudent old lady had regulated so as to just keep the flame alive and that was all, and he was attacking the food in a manner which plainly indicated that he had not sat down to a "good square meal" for some time.

"Aha, Ben, my tulip, that's the stuff!" he exclaimed, his eyes glistening at sight of the foaming mug of ale. "That's the sort of tippie for yours truly!"

As old Googage set the ale down before the tramp, for the first time he got a good view of his face, and he stared in astonishment at it, for not only was it rough and unshaven, but there was a discolored lump on the forehead right above the nose, and two rings of black around the eyes, which plainly betokened to the experienced gaze of the innkeeper that some powerful fist had been taking liberties with Mr. Milligan's frontispiece.

"Hallo! who have you been running against?" Googage asked, as he sat down on the opposite side of the table.

"Benjamin, you are too much for me," Milligan replied, with his mouth full, and then he took a great swallow of the ale. "It was a young cove wot I picked up for a duffer, jest outside the town. You know I was allers very nandy with my dukes, and I jest cheeked this feller 'cos I thought that I could maul 'im if he come up to the scratch. I took 'im for one of those paper-collar chaps, you know, but, blow me tight! if he didn't get in on me at the first crack."

"And he gave you those beauty-spots, eh?"

"Oh, no, that was the second lick. He nearly cracked my ribs with the furst one, and then, like a fool, I wasn't satisfied that I had knocked at the wrong door, but I must go for 'im ag'in, and then he jest flattened me right out. I'd

put up my mauleys with a good many of 'em, from Tom Sayers downwards, but this chap was the smartest of 'em all."

"One of the college boys, I suppose; you ought to have had better sense; nearly all the students know how to handle themselves, jest like the Oxford boys at 'ome."

"Well, I got all I wanted; I ain't difficult to satisfy."

By this time the fellow had made quite a substantial meal, and then, with one long pull, he finished the ale, setting the mug down with a sigh and a wishful look.

"Will you have another one?" asked the innkeeper, rising. In his heart he thoroughly despised his unworthy relative, yet he yielded to the sacred claims of hospitality.

"No, thankee," responded the tramp, reluctantly, and the refusal evidently cost him a struggle.

"You're quite welcome to it, you know," Googage remarked. "I can't say that I'm glad to see ye, 'cos that would be a lie, for I ain't; you never was good for much, except for getting into trouble and dragging in everybody else that tried to help you, but still I ain't a-going to refuse a bit to eat or a sup of ale while I have it."

"I'm very much obligated to you," Mr. Milligan replied, rising and bowing with stately politeness, "and I guess that there ain't much love lost atween us; you're an honest worm, while I'm a soarin' eagle—"

"And your wings have been cut many a time," Googage added, dryly.

"I'll fetch my mark some of these days, when my luck turns, see if I don't; and now I must be off. Do you 'appen to know, Benjamin, my tulip, where a certain Doctor Artemas Peabody lives?"

The innkeeper stared at the question.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

"DOCTOR ARTEMAS PEABODY?" asked the innkeeper, slowly.

"That's the name, and he's the pippin I want."

"What do you want with him?"

The tramp laid his finger alongside of his nose and then he winked, slyly.

"Jest as if I should tell you that, you know."

"Oh, of course it's no business of mine, only I was rather taken aback at the idea of your wanting to see the doctor."

"He's the gentleman as I've got business with, and a precious long way I've come to see him, too. No doubt you're staggered at a poor cove like me a-having business with a nob like him, but it's the truth for all that, and I'll bet you a trifle, Ben, that I make a raise out of the doctor afore I get through with him."

"Oh, you're going to make a raise out of the doctor, eh?"

Milligan looked at him suspiciously for a moment, before he answered the question, as if he was afraid that he had said too much.

"All in an honest way, you know; no blackmail or anything of that kind. The fact is, Ben, I don't mind telling you, you know; I let the doctor have some valuable property about sixteen years ago, and now I've come to get it back."

"You let the doctor have some valuable property?" cried the innkeeper, in astonishment.

"Oh, yes; you wouldn't believe that I ever had sich a thing, would you, to look at me now?"

"No, I shouldn't."

"It's a fact though, and I think that the doctor will fork over pretty lively; he's bleeding rich, ain't he?"

"What makes you think so?" asked Googage, evasively.

"Why, 'cos he was pretty well off then, and that's a matter of seventeen or eighteen years ago," and the tramp looked anxiously at the innkeeper as he spoke, a lurking suspicion in his mind that the doctor's condition financially might not be as good as he could have wished.

"Well, Jerry, if you've waited all these years to make a stake out of the doctor, all I've got to say is, that I'm afeard that you'll have your labor for your pains."

"You don't tell me so, now?" cried Milligan, in surprise.

"Fact! he was pretty well off, but about eight or ten years ago he went into a real estate speculation over in Somerville and when the panic of '73 came it completely broke him. They say that he's taking every cent that he can earn now except jest enough to live on, to pay off old debts."

"Well, mine is an old debt, a precious old debt," Milligan remarked, thoughtfully, "but if he ain't got the stamps of course my little game won't work."

"No, not much."

"Do you s'pose that he could raise a thousand dollars?" the tramp asked, reflectively.

Googage indulged in a prolonged whistle.

"A thousand dollars! and are you going for a stake like that?"

"Oh, bosh! that ain't nothing!" Milligan replied, contemptuously. "If he had the stamps I could strike him fer five thousand!"

"Five thousand!" cried the innkeeper, in amazement.

"Or ten, maybe; yes, he'd go ten thousand dollars if he was well fixed. His wife—how is she? ain't she got the stamps? When these rich nob's fail, you know, their wives generally make a big rake out of it."

"Bless you, man! his wife's been dead for these ten years!"

The under-jaw of the tramp dropped.

"The old woman dead!"

"Yes, ten years ago."

"Well, here's a pretty kettle of fish!"

"Does that bother you?"

"Rayther! Well, I'll toddle along; there's no good of my standing here and talking to you about the thing. But it's bleeding hard, you know, when a man has made provision for his old age and comes for to go for it and finds that it ain't there, it's a blooming shame, you know! Well, I'll see you ag'in, Ben; so long!" The tramp marched to the door; but on the threshold suddenly paused. "There! if I wasn't a-going without finding out where the old bloke lives!"

"Putnam street," responded Googage, and then he gave the fellow the necessary directions in regard to finding the house.

Mr. Milligan departed, leaving the old innkeeper in a state of great amazement.

"Ten thousand dollars," he murmured, "and where in this world did Jerry Milligan ever get anything worth ten thousand dollars or the hundredth part of that sum?" And the old man sat down and wrestled in his mind with this puzzle.

As for the tramp he proceeded straight to the house of the doctor, and, as it was not far off, in some eight or ten minutes he stood before the door.

"This must be the place," he muttered, "a brown house with a mansard roof and a lamp-post in front of the door—plenty of big trees in the yard. This is the werry identical spot. And the Doc is broke, eh?" he continued, meditatively, leaning over the fence and trying to peer through the trees into the open windows of the house, which sat quite a distance back from the street. "Well, now, if that's the truth the jig is up as far as he is concerned, and I'll have to come down on the other, and that's a precious sight more troublesome. I hate to have to do anything with women, anyway, but if the doctor is gone up, why, it can't be helped; but first, let me see if I've got that leetle document all correct."

Turning and leaning his back against the gate, so as to have the benefit of the light of the lamp, he fished out a tin tobacco-box from an inner pocket, and opening it took from it a folded paper, yellow with age.

This he opened carefully and by the light of the lamp perused it; at the bottom of the paper was the bold, clerkly signature of Doctor Artemas Peabody.

"There, I think that there ain't no mistake about this here leetle document!" he exclaimed, with a chuckle, as he carefully folded it up again, replaced it in the box and then consigned it to his pocket again.

"I guess that the Doc won't deny that 'ere big signature of his'n!"

But hardly had the triumphant speech passed his lips, when a sudden idea occurred to him—an idea that made him scowl and glare around him at the darkness.

"S'posen she's dead!" he muttered; "the Doc's wife is gone, and mebbe she's slipped off the handle, too! Well, that would be a left-handed lick in the jaw! What an ass I was that I didn't ask Ben, but then he might have suspicioned something; he was a-worrying 'bout what I wanted the doctor for; but what harm would it have done? If she's a cold corpus, why then I'm dished, and it's a bleeding shame if it is so!"

Then again the tramp turned his attention to the house.

"I think I can see women's dresses through them windows," he muttered.

The creeping vines clinging to the pillars of the veranda, and the bushes in the grounds in front, obstructed the view so that it was almost impossible to distinguish clearly the figures of the occupants of the parlor.

"Shall I walk up boldly and ring the front door-bell like a precious nob, or shall I skirmish round the house and see 'ow the land lays afore I pitches in?" meditated Mr. Milligan.

The latter course was decidedly more to his liking, as, through all his life, his way had ever been a devious one, and he was about to put the plan in execution when the approach of a gentleman up the street attracted his attention.

"I'll wait until this bloke passes, 'cos he might suspicion that I wasn't after no good," Milligan muttered, and so he crossed the sidewalk and leaned carelessly up against one of the trees which lined the street, taking care to get in the shade so as to avoid observation.

But the new-comer had the eyes of a lynx, and he at once recognized the tramp.

"Hollo, Milligan, is that you? and where did you come from? I thought that you were hung, or in jail for the rest of your natural life, long ago!"

The tramp turned, for a moment dumbfounded by the frank and not over complimentary salutation, but as soon as he caught sight of the face of the speaker, his countenance changed.

"Why, if it ain't Mr. Harry Gray!" he exclaimed, ducking his head in salutation, while a broad grin appeared upon his features.

The new-comer was indeed the stroke-oar's cousin, Mr. Harrison Grahame, or, as he was known in the sporting world Harry Gray.

He and the tramp were old acquaintances, for on a certain occasion he had picked up Milligan as the man to do a piece of dirty work, which pretty near cost the tramp his life, although Gray made a "pot" of money by it.

At one of the Western races Gray had bet largely against the favorite horse in a particular race, and he had employed Milligan to "get at" the horse, or, in plainer words, to poison him so that the speed would all be taken out of him. Milligan contrived to do the job by getting into the confidence of the boy who watched the stable at night; he got the boy—the boy, by the way, was a stalwart young fellow of two-and-twenty—drunk, and then "doctored" the horse, and so skillfully was the job performed—Milligan had learned the trick in England—that no one had any suspicion that the horse was amiss until the race was over and the favorite had finished nowhere. Then, of course, there was a great hue-and-cry raised, but nothing could be proved and the plotters reaped a rich harvest. The "boy," though, had his suspicions, although he was careful to keep them to himself for fear of being blamed, but the next time he met Milligan he nearly pounded the life out of him.

"You're the very man I want; I've got a job on hand for you!" Gray exclaimed.

"No more boss business, for I get all the kicks and you all the halfpence!"

"What are you doing here?"

"I've got a little trifle of business in the house yonder."

"Who with—Doctor Peabody?"

"Do you know him?" asked Milligan, eagerly.

"Oh, yes, intimately."

"Is he well fixed?"

"No, poor as a church-mouse."

Milligan heaved a sigh.

"But I'm in a hurry; I'll meet you in the square at seven to-morrow morning, right in front of the car-office. Are you broke?"

"Regularly cleaned out."

"Here's a five for you; don't fail to come, for it will be money in your pocket;" then after giving the bill, Gray departed.

CHAPTER XV.

THE LOVERS.

"WELL, now, if this here ain't wot I calls a streak of luck!" the tramp exclaimed, carefully stowing the bill away in an inner pocket. "Jest as I see'd the hull bottom a-tum'lin' out of this here little trick that I've bin a-counting on for the last ten or twelve years, this precious sharp, Mr. Harry Gray, turns up, and he's a sharp 'un, he is! There ain't any of the nob's wot kin give him p'int's! What he don't know ain't worth knowing! He's up to some game, in course; he never does anything fair and aboveboard, but he plays to win every time, and wot's the odds?"

Milligan now turned his attention to the house again; all was quiet, and so he opened the gate noiselessly and stole cautiously toward the mansion over the lawn, taking particular care to avail himself of the shelter of the trees so as to mask himself from observation if any one chanced to be looking out of the parlor windows, which were large ones, extending clear to the floor, and as the night was warm, they were all thrown wide open.

And as the tramp stole on, as cautiously as a thief in the night, toward the house, with eyes only for the prospect before him, he had no suspicions that a dark form, which had been skulking along on the other side of the street, evidently watching him, had crossed the thoroughfare, and, entering the garden, was stealing behind him as cautiously as a red Indian in the depths of the great primeval forest tracking a foe.

This watcher was Mr. Harry Gray.

The few words that the tramp had spoken had excited his curiosity, and he had determined to keep a watch upon Milligan and ascertain, if possible, what his business was with Doctor Artemas Peabody.

Gray was playing for a great stake now, and he did not propose to lose a single move in the game if he could help it.

The tramp, shabby and disreputable, could have no honest business with the old doctor, and if by some accident he did have, why was he skulking like a thief through the garden instead of walking boldly up to the front door?

"No, no, my friend," Gray muttered, as he tracked the fellow through the garden, "there's some mischief afoot, and though I may not care to have a finger in the pie, yet I am determined to find out all about it. Whatever concerns Doctor Peabody probably concerns Bub and most certainly concerns Winifred, and since Bub will not give me Helena, and it is doubtful

if I can get her without his consent, then, by Heaven! I will take Winny away from him if I can. I like her a deuced sight better than the other girl, anyway! It's only the fortune of Helena that attracted me; personally she's not my style; I don't admire these cold and haughty beauties."

And now, leaving the tramp skulking through the shrubbery, intent upon finding some secure nook from whence he could command a view of the doctor's parlor, and Gray tracking him like his shadow, we will see what the inmates of the house—all so unconscious of this double espionage—were about.

The parlor was a double one—two rooms, front and rear, connected by large sliding doors. The doors were about half open, just far enough to enable the watchers in the garden to detect that there was some one in the rear room when they moved about, but not enough so that they could command an unobstructed view of the apartment.

Helena and the young Virginian had been sitting in the front parlor, but the girl had gone into the back room in search of a book, and the young man had followed.

"I wanted to show you the book, she said, searching fruitlessly for it in the bookcase; 'I forget the name, but it's one of the new English novels, and in one chapter there is such a spirited account of the great college boat-race.'"

"Ah, that is something that lies beyond the genius of the pen to paint!" he replied; "words are too weak to describe such a thing; it must be seen; it cannot be imagined."

"And yet very wise men have declared that imagination is far stronger than reality," she observed, with a smile, seating herself within the embraces of a huge cushioned arm-chair.

"In some cases perhaps it is the truth, but not always," he answered, seating himself on an ottoman by the side of the chair wherein the girl reclined.

"Now, don't sit there, Mr. Peyton!" she exclaimed, just a little impatience in her tone.

"And why not?" he asked, in wonder.

"Why, because—because—well, because, that's why! Don't you know, Mr. Peyton, that you never ought to ask a woman for her reason?"

"Because she never has any, eh?"

Helena contracted her pretty eyebrows and shook her finger warningly at the young man.

"Take care! don't you say rude things, or I shan't like you."

"Well, I'm very much obliged for the candid confession that you *do* like me; I was never certain of it before," he said, with perfect coolness.

"You're a naughty boy to twist my words around, and I shall have to complain to the doctor; you're entirely too forward."

"That is a merit sometimes; but come, tell me honestly, why do you wish me to rise from this extremely comfortable position?"

"Why—can't you guess? What a silly fellow you are!"

"Yes, I suppose that I am, as far as you are concerned," the Virginian replied quickly.

Helena made a wry face and tossed her head impatiently. In these word encounters she rarely got the best of the young man and yet she was continually provoking them.

"Suppose any one should come in and find you sitting here—what would he think?"

"Oh, I could easily explain the matter."

"How?" and the girl opened her big, blue eyes wide in astonishment.

"A suitor at the feet of the goddess he adored!" replied Peyton, coolly.

"Oh, well, if you *won't* get up I must!" Helena exclaimed, springing up from the chair, a slight blush crimsoning her cheeks.

"No, no, no, stay where you are!" cried Peyton, rising quickly. "I'll get a chair and seat myself at a discreet and respectful distance." And suiting the action to the word he placed a chair against the very wall of the apartment and sat down in it.

Helena resumed her seat and for five minutes at least neither one spoke.

The girl was the first to break the silence.

"What splendid company you are!" she exclaimed. "One would never grow tired if you were near to amuse them."

"It has been a very fine day," sententiously.

"Oh, what do I care about the weather?"

"We need rain, though."

"Oh, bother! what do I care?"

"There's fifty more students this year in the college than were there last year."

"What on earth do you suppose I care for that?"

"Well, suggest a subject and I will converse about it to the best of my ability."

"You need not sit quite so far off!" she said, abruptly, a shy light shining in her eyes and a demure smile playing around the corners of her mouth.

Gladly Peyton came out of the corner and placed his chair so that he could lean his arm on the cushioned support which upheld Helena's charming hand.

"Nor get so near, either."

"Ah, there is no pleasing you!"

"Tell me, Dick, what has made you act so strangely to-night? You seem all out of sorts."

"Can't you guess?"

"No."

"Harrison Grahame has arrived."

Just a little bit of a cold look came over the beautiful face, and the well-poised head assumed a prouder carriage.

"Well, what of it; what has the arrival of Mr. Harrison Grahame to do with you? Why should it affect you in *any* way?"

"And he had a long interview with your brother."

"Yes?"

"Can't you guess what he comes after?"

"I do not understand how it concerns me at all," the girl answered, coldly. "Why should I care to guess anything about it?"

"Because he comes after you!"

"After me?"

"Yes; he is a suitor for your hand."

"He may spare himself the trouble," Helena replied, haughtily.

The face of the Virginian brightened up. It was the first time that he had ever heard the girl express herself so decidedly.

"I am very glad indeed to hear you say so," Peyton remarked, honestly, "for I have been sorely afraid that you would favor him. The influence he has over your brother is wonderful."

"Yes; I do not understand it," Helena observed, thoughtfully. "Otis believes and trusts in him fully."

"But you do not join with him in this trust?" Peyton asked, eagerly.

"No, I do not. You see," said the girl, smiling, "that I answer your question as frankly as you ask it. I will own honestly to you that there is something about Grahame that I do not like at all, although in reality, though he is my cousin, I know very little of him. Of course I've heard ugly stories that he does not lead quite the life that a gentleman of his position in society should lead; that he is on intimate terms with men whom the world at large looks on with suspicion; but Otis trusts him, Otis believes in him, and more than once I've heard him say that Harrison's errors were all of the head not of the heart."

"Yes, it is really astonishing the influence he has over your brother, and at one time I feared that Otis might be swayed by him in regard to you."

"Oh, no; you must not think that!" Helena protested. "Otis is too good a brother to attempt to influence me in any degree."

"Thanks for that assurance!" Peyton exclaimed, quickly. "Ah! Helena, you have taken a weight from my heart."

"Why, what has it to do with *you*?" the girl asked, with a charming smile.

"Ah, Helena, you know that I love you to distraction!" the Virginian cried, impetuously, rising and leaning over the back of the girl's chair. "You *know* that, sleeping or waking, your image is ever before me; that—"

A light footfall interrupted the speech, and looking up Peyton beheld the doctor who had entered the room, unconscious that it was occupied.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DOCTOR EXPLAINS.

"WOULDN'T I make a good actor, doctor?" cried Peyton, with ready wit. "Miss Lawrence doubted my abilities, and I was just giving her a specimen of my talents in that line."

"Oh, there's no doubt about your histrionic genius," the old doctor replied, with never a smile on his mild, benevolent face. "If you had not explained I should have thought that, unwittingly, I had interrupted a love scene."

"Oh, doctor, how *could* you?" exclaimed Helena, rising in confusion and preparing to beat a retreat.

"If you are going up-stairs, tell Winny that I wish to see her, please," the doctor said, thus opening a line of retreat for the embarrassed girl.

"Very well," and Helena took herself and her blushes out of the room.

Peyton, perfectly satisfied, with all the blindness of youth, that he had succeeded in pulling the wool over the doctor's eyes, to use the old saying, took out his cigar-case and offered it to the doctor.

"I'm going to try a cigar on the veranda; will you join me?"

"No, thank you, not at present; where is Otis? has he gone out?" the doctor questioned.

"I think not; he was up-stairs when I came down."

Then, taking a chair, Peyton went through one of the open windows to the veranda, sat down, lighted his cigar and abandoned himself to that dreamy pleasure which comes from a good cigar enjoyed with a contented mind and happy heart.

The Virginian little dreamed that this movement on his part was viewed with intense disgust by two individuals of whose proximity he had no idea—the tramp and his watcher, Mr. Harrison Grahame, both of them concealed in the shrubbery hardly thirty feet away. But, lighting his cigar and tilting his chair till the top-rail rested against the wall behind him, he gave himself up to dreamy meditation. For the

first time Helena had allowed him to see, not only that he had nothing to fear from his rival, Mr. Harrison Grahame, but that she herself was not indifferent to his suit.

A pleasing prospect, truly, and it was no wonder that, as Peyton sat and smoked, he felt a holy calm stealing over his soul.

"Ah! there's nothing half so sweet in life as love's young dream!"

The doctor, seating himself in the chair which Helena had vacated, gave himself up to reflections which were far from being pleasant.

"This is the second couple of young lovers that I have stumbled on to-day," he murmured. "Is there any peculiar atmosphere about this house which conduces to this sort of thing, I wonder?" And he smiled sadly to himself at the conceit. "Ah, no! It is the natural affinity that these young hearts have for each other. I mistrusted that there was a love affair between these two, some time ago; but Otis and Winifred, blind dreamer that I am, I never suspected it until to-day; and yet, I might have known that for them to fancy each other was the most natural thing in the world. Winny is a very jewel of a girl, while Otis is a fine, handsome, manly fellow! What an excellent match it would be but for the one thing, and I must keep that secret. I must let these children, both of whom I love better than I do any other two people in the world, believe that I am heartless and cruel—that for a mere whim I separate them. I must not—dare not speak! I can only wait and pray that Heaven in its own good time may mercifully remove the barrier that separates them; but, oh! if these two children love each other as well as I think they do, what misery they will suffer until that time comes! And it may never come! And then, again—perhaps it has come and passed without my knowing anything about it?"

"On one weak, frail human life the happiness or misery of this poor child depends. For years I have not heard a word, and yet often am I haunted by the thought that suddenly and unexpectedly the wretched object may rise like a specter from the tomb and demand a reckoning."

The old gentleman heaved a deep sigh and for a few moments he was silent, buried in deep thought; then again he spoke.

"Suppose I let this affair go on without attempting to stop it? Suppose I yield to the belief that the grave hides the old-time secret, as perhaps it does, for all that I do know; then these children will be happy and—no, no!" cried the doctor, suddenly, and shaking his head just as if he was carrying on a conversation with some one. "I cannot take upon my soul the responsibility of such a deception. If it should not be true—if Shylock came and demanded his pound of flesh, the terrible discovery would kill the poor child. No, a few hours of joy would be too dearly bought at such a price. I must pursue the path which I marked out for myself; 'I must be cruel to be kind.' Otis is, I fear, too deeply committed to listen to reason, but Winny, I trust, is not so much involved."

A light footfall in the entry and the rustle of a woman's fleecy robes interrupted the doctor's meditations, and soon the young girl came into the apartment. Walking straight up to the old gentleman she seated herself on the footstool by his side, as she spoke:

"Helena said that you wished to see me, father?"

"Yes, my dear, it is my purpose to have some very earnest conversation with you."

"With me, father?" a look of astonishment upon her face.

Not often the doctor looked grave and troubled, for by nature he was one of the most placid and genial of men.

"Yes, my dear child, I wish to talk to you upon a very serious subject indeed. You remember when I met you and Mr. Lawrence walking together to-day?"

A deep blush swept rapidly over the girl's face; for the first time she comprehended the nature of the subject that the doctor wished to speak about. She dropped her gaze shyly and plainly manifested the embarrassment which she felt.

"Until that moment I never dreamed of the danger to which, unwittingly, I have exposed you, my child."

"Danger, father?" Winifred asked, looking up in astonishment into the old gentleman's face.

"Yes, danger, my poor girl; that is the proper word. I must put the case strongly so that you will fully comprehend it," the doctor replied, both his tone and manner plainly betraying how deeply affected he was. "If I am not deceived in my guess, Mr. Lawrence is in love with you."

Again the girl hung her head, vainly striving to hide the blushes which crimsoned her cheeks.

"It is the truth, is it not, Winny?" the doctor continued, finding that the girl hesitated to reply. "He has told you that he loves you?"

"Yes, sir," the maiden answered, shyly, resting her burning face upon the cushioned arm of the chair.

"And, Winny—I'm going to ask you a question upon which all the happiness of the rest of your future life may depend. I won't say to you to answer me truly; I know that you will

do that, but I pray you to look into your heart before you reply and be sure that you do not make any mistake. Do you care anything for Mr. Lawrence?"

Gravely, solemnly the old gentleman put the question, and with an eager ear listened for the response.

Still the bowed head kept its place; still the cheeks burned: still the heart throbbed tumultuously, and it seemed to the agitated girl as if her lips would never uncloset to answer the question; but at last, after a mighty struggle with her maidenly modesty, she spoke.

"Yes, father, I do."

Low and faint was the whispered reply, but it sounded in the ears of the old man as loud as the trump of the great angel will be on the Judgment Day when it wakes even the sleepers in the tomb.

"Heaven help you then, my poor child!" he murmured, after a very long pause, smoothing with his trembling hand the silken locks which crowned the maiden's shapely head. "It is all my fault. I am a weak, miserable old man. I ought never to have allowed you to come together!"

"But is it so great a sin, father?" she asked, with childish simplicity, lifting her beautiful eyes, wherein the tear-drops were now glistening, and gazing with all the innocence of childhood into the old doctor's face.

"My child, you must drive this love out of your heart!" he exclaimed, earnestly. "Any union between you and Mr. Lawrence is utterly impossible!"

"I know that, father; that is what I told him to-day when he asked me to love him," she said, with a great effort restraining her tears. "I told him that I was only a poor girl, and that I was no match for so wealthy a gentleman as he is."

"Of course he would not listen to that reasoning for a moment!"

"Yes, he said that it didn't make any difference."

"He is a noble fellow!" the doctor exclaimed; "any man might be proud of such a son-in-law!"

"And, father, are there really such obstacles in the way of our union if Otis is willing—he has no one, you know, to object—and you give your consent?" she asked, timidly, looking up with pleading eyes in the face of the old gentleman.

The doctor saw that he had made a false step, and immediately proceeded to repair the blunder.

"Ah! my dear child, but I cannot give my consent," he replied, hurriedly, and in great confusion. "You must remember the relationship in which I stand to Otis. I am his guardian—I have had the care of him and of his fortune; shall I have the world say, then, that I conspired to entrap him into a marriage with my penniless child? that I, his second father, thirsted after some of his wealth, and, not being rogue enough to cunningly abstract it after the manner of our modern trustees, devised this union so that I and mine should profit by it? Would you have the world say this of your father?"

CHAPTER XVII.

AN EXPLOSION.

IMPULSIVELY the girl threw her arms around the old doctor's neck.

"Oh, no! no one would dare to say that of my good, kind, noble father!" she cried.

"Oh, yes, they would, my child; and, with the fact of the union, how could I dispute it?"

"You wish me then to give up all ideas of Otis?" she asked, with a dreamy, despairing look in her beautiful eyes, unclasping her arms from around the old man's neck and again sinking back to her seat upon the ottoman.

"Yes, my dear child, it is for the best that you should do so," responded the doctor, in a broken, trembling voice. "For my sake try and conquer this passion; Otis will soon go away—he will mingle with the world—plunge in the cares of business—he will get over it. Love is not with a man as it is with a woman; it is not the whole of his life; it is only the episode of a day."

"Ah, father, you don't lessen my misery when you tell me that my lover will soon forget me," the poor child murmured, with tearful eyes.

"Heaven forgive me, my poor stricken one, if by a single word I wound your already lacerated heart! Cheer up; it will be a single, terrible struggle and then all will be over."

"Yes, I am afraid that all will be over for me, in this life," Winifred replied; "all happiness," she continued, "for I know that I shall never know happiness hereafter."

"Trust in Heaven, child!" exclaimed the doctor, solemnly; "trust in Heaven and in time—time that great consoler of all mortal griefs."

Winifred, with her handkerchief, wiped her tears away. Weak and delicate as was the girl, apparently, yet she possessed a strong and stubborn will, and now when her father's voice indicated to her the path of duty, she resolved to tread it with firm and unyielding steps.

This calmness alarmed the old gentleman; he would much rather have seen her give way to a wild burst of tears. With the Scottish war-

rior he believed, "Give sorrow vent; the grief which does not speak whispers the o'erfraught heart and bids it break."

At this stage of the conversation an important interruption occurred.

Bub came striding into the room, evidently laboring under great excitement, which in vain he was striving to repress, followed by his sister, whose large eyes looked bigger now than ever, dilated as they were by amazement.

Otis had come "tearing" into her room, asked where the doctor was, and if she had seen Winny, and when informed by her that both father and daughter were down-stairs, he declared that he had something important to say to them and that he required her to be present at the interview.

Amazed, and altogether too astonished to say anything, she had followed him in silence down-stairs.

"Ah, Doctor Peabody! You're the very man I want to see!" Lawrence exclaimed.

The doctor had risen at his approach, and Winifred, her face pale and red by turns, had also sprung to her feet.

"And where is Peyton?" Bub continued. "I want all of our little household as witnesses!"

"Hallo! who wants me?" cried Peyton, from the veranda, suddenly recalled from his dream of peace by hearing his name pronounced.

"I do; come in here!" Bub answered.

The Virginian by this time had finished his cigar; so he flung the stump away and entered the house.

The tramp, who had listened to the summons, and watched the departure of the young man, improved the opportunity to get under a bush that grew right at the edge of the veranda, so that he could overhear any conversation within the house, carried on in ordinary tones.

Grahame, being quite near the window, did not move from his place of concealment. He could overhear very well where he was. From Bub's tone he had an idea that something of importance was about to transpire, and he thanked the lucky stars which had brought him along the street at the opportune moment to encounter the tramp and so suggest the idea of watching him.

"Now, then, that we are all assembled," the stroke-oar said, after Peyton had entered the room, "Doctor Peabody, before all here, I want to ask you a question."

The doctor anticipated easily enough what the question was likely to be, and he vainly attempted to postpone the scene which he saw was likely to ensue.

"Otis, I do not wish to answer any questions now!" he exclaimed, imploringly. "Come to my study—alone—and we will talk the matter over."

"No, doctor; what I have to say to you must be said in the presence of my sister, and in the presence of this lady," he answered, pointing to Winifred, who leaned upon a chair, pale and trembling with emotion, a very lily of a girl.

"Some other time, Otis, I beg!"

"No, no; now, doctor!" the young man replied, firmly. "No other time will answer like the present."

"Why, what is the matter, Otis?" exclaimed Peyton, in astonishment.

"Brother, what is the matter?" Helena demanded.

"In a very few words I will explain. Now, Doctor Peabody, in the presence of all I ask you why do you object to my suit for your daughter's hand?"

At this bold declaration, Winifred, unable longer to bear the scene with calmness, sunk into a chair and hid her face in her handkerchief, while Helena flew to her assistance.

"Otis, I cannot answer you, and you must not ask me!" the doctor replied, helplessly.

"Ah, but you must answer me, doctor!" Otis persisted, impetuously. "You are not treating me right—you are not treating Winifred right!"

"Otis, if you have any respect for me—any love for the old man who has tried to be like a second father to you, be satisfied with what I have already said to you and do not press the matter further!"

"But I am not satisfied!" Lawrence evidently was touched by the old gentleman's appeal, yet was not moved from his purpose. "Doctor, if this was any other subject but the one it is; if my heart—the future of my whole life were not interested in it, I would not insist upon an explanation; but as it is, I must. It is a duty I owe, not only to myself, but to that poor, weeping child yonder. You must give me a reason, doctor, why I cannot make your child my wife, if she be willing."

"Oh, doctor, don't be cruel!" exclaimed Helena, who was on her knees comforting Winny. "I'm sure that this dear girl will make Bub ever so happy! Now be good, and give me Winny for a sister!"

"It is impossible!" exclaimed the old man in agony of mind.

"Why is it impossible?" Bub demanded; "because I am rich and she is poor?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Doctor, you know that is no reason at all!" Lawrence exclaimed, impatiently.

"No, no, it is no reason!" Helena cried. "Be-

sides. I've got plenty of money of my own and I will willingly give Winny half of all I've got, and then she'll be rich enough to marry anybody!"

With a fervent kiss and a warm embrace, Winifred thanked her friend for the generous offer.

"By Jove! Miss Lawrence, you are a perfect paragon of a woman!" Peyton exclaimed, in admiration.

The doctor only sighed deeply.

"Come, doctor, what do you say to that?" asked Bub, utterly at a loss to understand the strange agitation of the old man.

"It is no use; the union is impossible!"

"Impossible!" cried Lawrence, incredulously.

"Oh, no, doctor, not impossible!" Helena exclaimed. "Now you must consent, for if Bub don't take Winny I know I shall never get a sister who will be half so dear to me!"

"Oh, yes, doctor, come! Let the course of true love run smooth for once!" the Virginian added, and Helena thanked him with a gracious smile.

Winifred said nothing; she only hid her face in her handkerchief and sobbed.

"Heaven knows, my dear children—for you are as dear to me as if you were my own flesh and blood—that right gladly would I not only give my consent to this union, but do all in my power to promote it but for one thing—"

"Because I am rich and she is poor?" Lawrence interrupted.

"What other reason should I have—what other reason can there be?" cried the unhappy old gentleman.

"I cannot believe it, doctor!" Bub protested, vehemently. "The reason is so utterly unworthy of you. Your whole course in this matter is so different from what I have a right to expect!"

"And, doctor, haven't I offered to make Winny rich?" demanded Helena. "I'm sure you ought to consent, for I know Bub will never be happy with any other girl."

"Come, doctor, yield and make a pair of true lovers happy!" Peyton adjured. "I know that you will never regret your action, and if Winifred feels any delicacy about taking a fortune from Helena, because she is Bub's sister, why, I've three splendid farms down in old Virginia and she shall have her pick out of the lot. She need have no hesitation about accepting the gift for I'm no relation to Bub now, whatever I may be in the future."

Helena was all ready to thank Peyton for his generous offer, but the unexpected conclusion of the speech caused her to blush to the temples and to busy herself quite industriously about Winny.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN IMPORTANT DISCLOSURE.

"Oh, my children, it must not—it cannot be. If I could unseal my lips and reveal to you the fatal secret—"

"Secret!" cried Lawrence, in astonishment, as the old gentleman paused in his abrupt confusion.

And the exclamation was echoed by Peyton and Helena, while even Winifred raised her head from amid the folds of her handkerchief and gazed at the doctor in astonishment.

"What secret?" continued Bub, as soon as he had recovered from the amazement which the doctor's words had excited.

"I do not know what I am saying!" the old man returned, confused; "I am in such a state of mental excitement that I am really not responsible for my words."

"I 'opes I ain't disturbing of a family party?" suddenly cried a strange, hoarse voice, and all within the room, turning, beheld the seedy tramp advancing into the room through one of the front windows.

"I made bold to come through one of the windys, you know, seeing as how they were open and I thought that I wouldn't go for to disturb the whole 'ouse by a-ringing of the front door-bell."

And then as the tramp finished and made a survey of the little party assembled within the parlor, a sudden recognition took place.

The two girls recognized in the man the rufian who had robbed Winny of her watch-chain that afternoon, and as for the fellow himself, he recognized in Bub the muscular young man who had taken such liberties with his person on the highway, that very day.

"If it isn't the wretch who robbed us this afternoon!" cried Helena; "put him out, Bub!"

The stroke-oar advanced at once to execute the command; but the tramp, retreating a step and putting both hands up to shield his face, cried out:

"Hold on and hold hard; let a chap speak when he comes on business, can't you? And as for you, mister man! I don't want no more of you, I don't! Look at my heyas, now! Ain't I a nice-lookin' nob for to go inter the society of sich first-class ladies as these here two duchesses, with both peepers in mourning?"

"Let him alone, Mr. Lawrence, please, until we find out what he wants," said the old doctor,

who had been surveying the man with a steady, earnest gaze, and the scrutiny evidently troubled him.

"That's the talk, governor! Let a cove alone till he spits out his business; and in regards to you two ladies, I 'umbly 'opes you'll look over the trifling mistake that I made this here afternoon; the fact is, I 'ad been takin' a drop or two too much of beer, and when I gets my skin full of beer, I allers tries them larks; it was a lark, that's all, bless yer! I'd 'a' brought the piece of chink back within half an hour, anyway, without troublin' this here young man, who is so handy with his fist, for to punch me in the smeller, and ornament me with this here pair of beauties," and the wretch winked his b'ackened eyes facetiously.

"What do you wish, sir?" asked the doctor, a very grave expression indeed upon his face, and any one well acquainted with the doctor and his moods would have been apt to imagine that he had recognized the man and expected trouble from him.

"Furst and foremost, is this the house of Doctor Artemas Peabody?" cried the fellow, loudly and boisterously.

"Yes, sir, that is my name."

"You're the Doc, then?"

"I am the doctor, sir."

"And see here, fellow, speak more respectfully when addressing that gentleman!" Peyton exclaimed, annoyed at the man's arrogant way.

"Sha'n't for you!" cried the tramp, impudently. "I reckon that one gentl'man ought for to know how to address another gentl'man without being told by any sich a little whipper-snapper as you are!"

"Why, you scoundrel!" exclaimed the Virginian, enraged, advancing, but Bub's strong arm restrained him.

"Let me deal with this fellow," the stroke-oar said. "Now then, go on; say what you have to say and begone, and, harkye! at the first insolent word I throw you out of that window!"

"I didn't mean no harm," Milligan growled, sulkily; "I was only a-jokin', that's all; and I say, my fine young gentl'man, I ain't got any quarrel with you, and I'll be very much obligated to you indeed if you'll keep your 'ands off of me in the futur'!"

"Keep a civil tongue in your head, then," Bub admonished.

"Your business, sir? You wish to see me?" the doctor queried, impatiently.

"If you are Doctor Artemas Peabody, you're the man for my money. Jest be kind and condescending enough for to cast your eyes over this bit of paper and tell me if it's your hand-write and your signature at the bottom onto it?"

And as he spoke the fellow fished out the tin tobacco-box, of which we have previously spoken, took out the folded paper and handed it to the doctor.

All within the room watched the scene with eager curiosity.

They wondered to see the doctor turn pale as his eyes fell upon the paper; they were amazed that his hand should tremble as he opened it and were startled at seeing great drops of perspiration ooze forth, like so many little waxen beads, upon his forehead.

"Well, governor, is that all O. K.?" the tramp asked, watching, with a cunning leer, as the old man read the paper.

The doctor responded to the question with a heavy sigh and the paper dropped from his nerveless hands.

The tramp sprang forward and picked it up.

"Too precious to be lost!" he cried, with a grin.

"Well, now, governor, I've come arter my property!" and then, looking around him, triumphantly, he noticed the amazement depicted upon the faces of all.

Some way, there was not one within the room but had an instinctive idea that some terrible disclosure was at hand.

"Oh, you needn't stare, my fine nob; nor you, too, you two beautiful duchesses!" he cried, hoarsely, and with the accents of a devilish joy in his voice. "Mebbe you think that it is only nob's wot has got property, but there's some things that we poor tramps can own as well as the gentry. Phaps you'd like to know what my property consists of; jest open your ears then and I'll astonish yer. Hem! 'Cambridge, July 10th, eighteen hundred and—' well, that ain't particular, we'll skip the year," he began, while all within the room listened with breathless interest, the doctor excepted; the old gentleman threw his arm over the back of a chair, which happened to be near him, and it seemed as if he would not have been able to keep his feet but for the support.

"Received from Jeremiah Milligan, late of the city of London, England, a female child, eight months old, which I hereby agree to bring up and care for as my own; and I further agree to deliver said child to its father, the aforesaid Jeremiah Milligan, on demand, at any time."

"That's the document, and ain't it a beauty? Could any lawyer chap 'a' writ it better? Not if I knows myself! I guess I've figured enough in the law-courts in my time to be able to write a receipt that no lawyer kin pull to pieces; and now, which one of these two is it?" and the

tramp, turning, surveyed the two girls with a sickening leer.

"Oh, merciful powers!" cried Winifred, the truth suddenly flashing upon her, and but for the supporting arms of Helena she would have fallen to the floor.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" the tramp exclaimed, in triumph, "and to think that I should have made your acquaintance so promise-us-like to-day, by a-going for your valuables! Blessed if I ever heerd of sich a lark! A father fur to rob his own darter, ho, ho, ho!"

"You infernal villain!" cried Bub, wrought up almost to frenzy by this awful discovery, and, flying at Mr. Milligan, he took that individual by the throat in a way that meant harm.

"Ah—choo—hoo, goo!" the wretch gurgled, half-strangled in the iron gripe of the stroke-oar.

"For heaven's sake be calm!" the good doctor cried, restraining the impetuous young man.

"Yes, be calm, Lawrence; there must be some horrible mistake about the affair!" averred Peyton, adding his efforts to the doctor's, and with such success that Bub released his grasp of Mr. Milligan's windpipe, but not until that interesting individual had become black in the face.

"Blow me tight!" that vagabond gasped, as soon as he recovered his breath, "do yer want to kill a cove? Yer better treat me well if yer going to be sweet on my gal!"

"Your girl!" cried Bub, in a fury, and but for the doctor and Peyton, who both clutched him, he would have treated the tramp to another dose of strangulation.

"Yes, she is my gal!" replied the tramp, defiantly, but at the same time taking the precaution to get behind a chair; "it's so, ain't it, doctor?"

"If you are Jeremiah Milligan, undoubtedly she is the child you intrusted to my charge," the doctor answered, sorrowfully.

"If I am Jerry Milligan!" cried the fellow, scornfully. "Well, I guess that there ain't much doubt about that! Furst and foremost, there's the receipt! that's all right ain't it?" The doctor nodded. "Oh, you can't go back on your own pot-hooks and hangers, you know, as they used to say when I was a baby. Then, if you've got any doubt about me, the warden of the State-prison at Charlestown knows me; Chief Bates down at the City Hall jail here can identify me; officer Parks on the Post beat kin swear to me; any of the perlice either here or in Charlestown, or in Boston, would be pretty apt to pick me out if I was 'wanted,' and if yer arter more respectable witnesses, call on any of the police justices for thirty miles around; all of 'em knows me like a book, and what more do you want?"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DECISION.

"My poor child, can you forgive me for the terrible deception that I have practiced upon you?" the good old doctor asked, approaching the agonized girl and bending over her.

"Oh, this is terrible," she murmured, sobbing as if her heart would break.

"Heaven forgive me! I thought that it was for the best!" the old man plead, cut to the heart by the grief of the girl. "It was my wife's idea, in the first place. Fate had never blessed us with children, and when this man, years ago, came begging from door to door with you, then a mere babe, in his arms, your beauty attracted the attention of my wife. We questioned this man about you and he told a pitiful story of how he had but recently arrived in this country, having lost his wife on the voyage, and that he didn't know what to do with the child, but was in hopes that he would be able to find some charitable folks willing to adopt it. The hearts of both myself and wife warmed to the poor babe, and we determined to take and care for it as though it was our own."

"The man gladly agreed to let us have the child provided we paid him a certain sum of money, and that I would sign a document agreeing to give up the child on demand; he said that he was going to California, and that if he made a fortune in the mines of course he should want to share it with his child. Foolishly I agreed to this, and signed the document that this man now holds. It did not trouble me then, for I did not believe that I would ever see or hear from him again; but for the last few years, as I have watched you grow up, increasing in beauty, in talent, and in goodness, each new day, then the thought of this man, and the power he possessed over your fate, has haunted me like a hideous nightmare. I have been afraid that this fatal hour would come—the wretched man who coolly sold you, an infant, to strangers, would appear and tear you away from your home to follow his miserable fortunes."

"Hullo! hullo! Draw it mild, governor!" the tramp exclaimed, indignantly. "Don't you go for to make the gal dissatisfied with her own natural flesh and blood!"

A visible shudder passed over Winifred's tender frame as she listened to the coarse words.

"I tried to do all for the best," the doctor continued, never taking any notice of the

tramp's expostulations, "and it was my knowledge of this terrible secret and my fear that some day this wretched man would step forward and claim you that made me horrified when I discovered that you had learned to love."

"I say, governor, don't abuse a feller now!" Milligan cried; "I'm a pretty decent sort of chap, as you'll all find out, afore long. Of course it's only natural for a daddy to want his gal wot he ain't had no good on for so long, but you kin argument with me; I ain't sp'iling for affection, anyway. I've managed for to git along without my beauty there for a good many years, and I guess I would manage to live through it if I didn't git her now. Jest talk to me the right way and I'm yer man for a trade, any time!"

"You are a thorough scoundrel!" exclaimed the doctor, in righteous indignation. "Your only object then in making this visit is to extort money!"

The fellow grinned and put his tongue in his cheek in a knowing sort of way.

"Wot's the use of a gal if yer can't make summut out on her, I'd like to know!" he replied.

Lawrence caught eagerly at the idea.

"Name your price!" he cried. "How much do you want to take yourself out of the way and never let us see your ugly face again?"

"Aha! now you are a talkin'!" Mr. Milligan chuckled, rubbing his hands together in glee. "But I ain't on naming a sum in lump, you know, that ain't my leetle game! I'm gitting old, I am, and a-gitting tired a-tramping around the country and a-trying to git fat, living on nothing. I wants a regular income jest like a nob, bless if I don't! So much every month, you know, paid inter my bank where I keeps my account, so I kin draw my check onto it like a gentl'man, and no stingy swag will do for me, either. That gal is a beauty! you might hunt from here to China and not find one nicer nor she is! Now, fair and honest, I want 'bout four hundred dollars a month for the rest of my nat'l existence for her!"

"And now, fair and honest, not one single penny shall you get for me!" cried Winifred, abruptly, rising, statue-like, with her colorless, marble-hued face. "And you, Otis—what a miserable, degraded wretch you must think I am to suppose for one instant that I will be a party to any such shameful bargain! What right has this man to sell me like a slave even if I am his child? In a very short time I shall attain my majority and then I shall be free of his control, and until that time I will go with him if he requires me to do so, work for him, but not sell myself for his enrichment!"

"Oh, what a blarsted idiot!" cried Mr. Milligan, in supreme contempt. "I leaves it out to you, all on you ladies and gentl'men, if you ever heered sich awful trash?"

"Winny, you are mad to speak in this way!" Lawrence urged. "What care I if chance made you the child of this wretch? I am rich; I can easily give him the sum he asks; I shall never miss it, and we can be as happy as if he had never existed."

"In course you kin! Who says ye can't!" cried the tramp, eager after his stake. "Bless yer life! I won't trouble yer, jest as long as yer ponies up the rhino on time. Why, you kin be jest as 'appy as two turtle-doves a-singing in a cage!"

But the weak, childlike girl had suddenly become a cold, resolute, stern-faced woman.

"No, no, Otis!" she cried, despairingly, and yet with iron-like firmness, "the knowledge that I have gained this night erects forever an unsurmountable barrier between us. Do you think that I would permit you to marry me knowing now as I do the heritage of shame that awaits me? My father, when he comes to claim me, proves his identity by running over the number of prisons wherein he has served his time. You are mad when you dream of making me your wife! The secret will out—it will not down and die, but some chance will be sure to reveal and blazon it to the world! This man is satisfied now with a certain amount of money in payment for his silence; but, let us once wed and who shall set bounds to his demands? You must comply with what he asks, or else he will publish the terrible secret to the world, and how would you bear such a threat as that? You, of the grand old family which for two hundred years at least has borne itself proudly, and kept a stainless name before the world! And do you think, now, that I would be the means of fastening this human vampire upon you? Never! I would die by inches in the most miserable cellar or garret in the world, perishing by slow starvation before I would see you so humiliated!"

"Did anybody ever heer sich blarsted nonsense?" cried the tramp, in a fury, the moment she had finished her passionate speech. "And do think of her a-standing there and a-calling of her own nat'l flesh and blood parent sich awful names! Do I look like a vampire? Blow me tight if I ain't a man of my word! I wouldn't do sich a think as she talks about fer the world! I'd take my 'davy on it, any time!"

"Otis, Winifred is right," the doctor now in-

terrupted; "it would be utter madness for you to attempt to silence this man with money; his appetite would only grow on what it fed. The four hundred a month would soon increase into a thousand. For the present, be guided by me and give up the idea. We cannot tell what the future may bring forth."

"Aha! you want to bilk me out of my stake?" cried the tramp, in a rage. "You says to yourself, yer do, that I'm an old man, and that I won't last long, and then you kin have your fun without a-paying for it; but I'm a tough old customer, and I'm good for ten years yet, and mebbe twenty; I'll jest 'old on to life for to spite yer, see if I don't."

"Winifred, I will be entirely guided by you," Lawrence said; "whatever you decide shall be as law to me."

"Take him, you idiot!" snarled Mr. Milligan, wickedly; "don't let the chance slip; you'll never git sich another!"

"Otis, at the present I can only say good-by," she replied, with a sad, sweet smile, extending her hand, which her lover eagerly grasped.

"W'at are you a-saying good-by for?" growled the tramp, surlily; "where do you suppose you are going?"

"Why, with you; haven't you come to take me?"

"Well, I reckon I ain't one of the nobs a-walking around with a big pocket-book, chuck full of greenbacks, for to pay young women's hotel bills with; and, I say, old chap, since you kept her so long can't you put up with her for a few days longer?"

"She is welcome to stay so long as I have a home," the doctor responded, promptly.

"That's the ticket! So stay where you are, and mind, don't try any monkey shines, for to try and hide her away from me, 'cos they won't work! I jest want her to stay here for a few days 'til I gets time to turn myself around and see where I am, and then as soon as I gets a place for her—a place fit for a young gal, I'll come arter her. Take care of yourself all on you; see you ag'in, and mebbe we kin make a trade; so long!"

And then Mr. Milligan retreated through the window into the garden again, and slowly made his way to the front gate, opened it, and passed into the street.

"Curse these women!" he muttered, ferociously, as he slouched along; "you never can't do nothing with them. If she had only 'tumbled' to the 'racket' and played her points the right way, I'd be independent for life and so would she; but, as it is, the best little game I ever worked is completely sp'il'd!"

"Oh, no, not at all!" said a voice at his elbow, and as Milligan turned, both alarmed and astonished, he discovered that the speaker was Harry Gray.

"Let me in for a share, old man, and I'll engage that it shall be the biggest thing you ever tumbled into in all your life!"

CHAPTER XX.

MR. GRAY'S LITTLE GAME.

GRAY, from his place of concealment in the yard, had overheard all that had passed within the room, and his quick wits at once had devised a plan to turn the matter to his own advantage.

He was considerably astonished at the discovery of the relationship that existed between the old tramp and the pretty Winifred, for he had had no suspicion at all of the thing. A mere whim of the moment had impressed him with the design of playing the spy for the purpose of discovering what the tramp's business was with the doctor; but he had had no idea when he entered upon the thing that it would so turn that he could use it to advantage.

But with the revelation of the mystery there flashed a scheme into his head whereby he could profit materially by the unexpected events.

And so he had followed the old vagabond up closely, when he left the garden overheard his muttered words and accosted him as we have related.

Milligan turned in alarm.

"Eh, wot's that; wot do ye mean?" he cried, not exactly knowing what to make of it.

"Just what I say, Jerry; let me in for a share and I'll make a good thing out of it for both of us."

"Wot do you mean? Blame me if I understand wot you are a-driving at!" Milligan was a pretty old bird, and not to be easily caught. Of course from Gray's manner he suspected that he knew something of what had transpired, but had no idea that he had overheard every word.

"Oh, you know very well," Gray answered, in his careless way. "You've got a good thing, but you don't know how to handle it."

Milligan was very much inclined to be suspicious.

"Wot is it you're arter? Blow me tight, if I know!" he declared.

"Why, I'm after a share of that whack of four hundred dollars a month which you didn't succeed in getting, and which you'll never get without some better head to manage the job than that noddle that you've got on your shoulders, my friend."

"Say, how did you come to know anything 'bout it?" the tramp asked, astonished at the information of the other.

"Why, when you told me you had business with the doctor, you excited my curiosity, and therefore I 'piped' you off, and, snugly hid under a bush in the garden, I saw you enter the doctor's parlor and overheard every word that passed."

"Well, may I be blessed! if that wasn't a smart trick!" exclaimed the tramp, in admiration.

"Oh, I'm up to a thing or two, once in a while."

"And you think that I can't manage the job?"

"You big idiot, you!" cried Gray, in contempt; "didn't you make a nice mess of it to-night?"

"I did the best I knew how!"

"And that was bad enough!" Gray retorted, in contempt. "Now, let me show you how the ground lay and how you went to work and spoiled the nicest little pie that I've seen for some time."

"It wa'n't no pie to me," Milligan growled.

"Because you didn't know how to cook it. Listen, while I explain: Sixteen or eighteen years ago you left your child with the doctor. He, like a fool, ignorant of the well-established fact that men of your stamp always turn up when they are least expected, brings up the girl in the belief that she is his own daughter. She grows up pretty and interesting; my cousin, Otis Lawrence—"

"Wot! is that iron-fisted fellow your cousin?" cried Milligan, in amazement.

"Aha! he was the student, then, that ornamented your face this afternoon?"

"He handles his dukes like a bruiser!" the tramp growled.

"I should think so; he is admitted to be the best amateur boxer in this section of the country, and has plenty of muscle to back his skill."

"He hits like a horse's kick, curse him!"

"He is the stroke-oar of the Harvard crew, and the best man of his inches that ever stripped. But, to return to our mutton: my cousin, Otis—Bub, as he is generally termed—who is independently wealthy, falls in love with your child, is all ready to marry her at a moment's warning, and she is equally set upon him. The old doctor tries to dissuade them because he knows the secret of the girl's parentage, and he has a sort of an impression that you will turn up some time, and that, in the character of a father, you will be no credit to the girl. You do turn up, and exactly as the doctor expected. He's more sense than I gave him credit for, for these scholars are generally fools where practical affairs are concerned, as is plainly evident by his agreeing to turn over the child to you, instead of making you surrender it legally to him in the first place. As I said, you appear: you come in through the window, like the infernal old idiot that you are! dressed like a tramp, looking as if you had come straight from the work-house or the chain-gang, you bluster and threaten, act like a ruffian, and frighten the life out of the girl with your fool's talk about the Warden of State Prison, jails and police courts; and the upshot of the matter is that you have so disgusted the girl, and so impressed her with the idea that you are the biggest scamp unhung, that she wouldn't marry any decent man, no matter how much she loved him, while you are anywhere around. And now, old man, own up; hav'n't I put the case exactly as it is? and don't you think that you are the biggest idiot that ever walked?"

Milligan scratched his head thoughtfully after this uncomplimentary speech.

"Mebbe I hav'n't handled it as it ought to be done," he admitted, dolefully, "but I ain't used to play sich games."

"You can 'doctor' a horse better, can't you?"

This little reference to the job he had once so cleverly performed for Mr. Gray, made the old scamp wince. Never would his bones forget the pummeling they got on that occasion.

"Well, what do you say, do you want me to take a hand in this thing and see if I can't fix things so that a big stake can be made out of it?" Gray continued.

"Well, I dunno," remarked Mr. Milligan reflectively.

"You don't see any chance to make a raise out of it, do you?"

"Nary chance!" confessed the old tramp, with a sigh.

"Well, I do; I see from five to ten thousand dollars in the affair."

Milligan stared.

"My heyes! You don't say so?"

"Honor bright; but I want a good whack—I want half, and in order to make my leetle game succeed you must obey my orders to the letter and without question."

"It's a bargain!"

"All right. Now, in the first place, you want money—have you got any?"

"Only a little besides the five you give me."

"Oh, that won't do; you've got to be all toggled out in a decent suit of clothes and then you can throw these old rags away; then you will want money for traveling expenses. I'll be your banker, for it will take a couple of hun-

dred before we can begin to make anything out of it. You can keep sober, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, as a judge, when I've got any business on hand."

"That's good; now the racket that we're to play is this: You're to dress yourself up in a decent suit of clothes, get yourself shaved and fixed up, then call upon the girl to-morrow and request a private interview with her. This granted, tell her that this appearance to-night in rags and dirt was all a device on your part to try her and the old doctor; that you are, and have been for some time, engaged in my service as master of my training-stables; the mention of my name will give confidence; say that you are making a good, fair living, and that you have got a little house in upper New York all fitted-up for her reception; say that you heard indirectly that there was a sort of flirtation going on between herself and my cousin, Otis; that you were not acquainted with him, except by reputation, but you did not think that it was a very good idea, as he was a very wealthy young gentleman and she was only a poor girl, and that you were afraid it was an infatuation which in time he would get over, and that you hoped she would give up all idea of him. Then say that you are ready to start for New York as soon as she can prepare herself, and hint that you would like to get back to your duties as soon as possible. Now, do you see my idea? You take the girl away and you hide her from my cousin. That, of course, will make him just crazy to find her, which, through my aid, in time, he will do. Your continually harping on the theme that he is a rich man, and you do not believe that he means honest by the girl, will, in due season, arouse in her breast a desire to prove to you that he does, and the first thing you know, she'll run off and get married to him. You see, I will be in my cousin's confidence and will engineer the whole thing, and I shall say to him that the best way to keep you quiet is to give you a certain sum down and a regular income payable monthly, but without the knowledge of his wife. The sum paid down I take; the income, you take; and now what do you think of the 'plant'?"

"Beautiful!" cried Milligan, enthusiastically. "Ah! Mr. Gray, you've got a lead on your shoulders!"

"Yes, I fancy that I wasn't born yesterday," Gray replied, complacently.

"Oh, it will work; there's no doubt about it!"

"Not the slightest, as long as we get the jail-bird idea out of the girl's mind and excite her womanly obstinacy in regard to the man she loves."

By this time the two had arrived at Harvard Square.

"Instead of meeting me here to-morrow," Gray remarked, "meet me in Boston on the steps of Faneuil Hall at eight in the morning, and then I'll have you togged out. Good-night!"

And then the twain parted, to meet again on the morrow to prepare to carry out Mr. Gray's little game.

CHAPTER XXI.

CARRYING IT OUT.

THE conspirators met at the time agreed upon. Milligan had already visited a barber, been shaved, had his hair cut and in part enjoyed a general "titivating" up.

"Hallo! you look like a different man already!" Gray exclaimed, as he surveyed his tool.

Gray had selected an early hour and a spot where he would not be apt to meet any acquaintances for a meeting-place; besides, there was an abundance of cheap, ready-made clothing stores in the immediate vicinity where Milligan could be refitted.

The part that the arch plotter had assigned to the old man was not a difficult one and it fitted him; a plain, common man, but no tramp or criminal; the head of a training stable, a man likely to be a little rough in speech and manner; such a character the old tramp could get along with very well, and Gray had little fear that the simple girl would detect the cheat. Besides, the very fact that the man pretended to be in his service would be sure to lull suspicion.

A deal of trouble Mr. Harry Gray was taking and for quite a small stake, one acquainted with the man would have remarked, nor was the sorting Beacon-streeter at all the sort of gentleman that one would suppose could be tempted to enter into a partnership with such an unsavory wretch as Jerry Milligan.

But Harry Gray was a shrewd fellow as men go, nowadays, and, as a general rule, he always had more than one string to his bow.

To one scheme he had devoted himself with great determination, and that was, by either fair means or foul to compass the defeat of the Harvard crew in the coming race with the Yale boys; good reason had he to work, for both fortune and reputation depended upon it. If the crimson handkerchiefs that spanned the heads of the Harvard men, came first over the winning line, he was a ruined man; but if, on the contrary, the blue of Yale led the way past the judge's boat, with a new fortune and an upright head he might try a fresh deal in the game of life.

His first move in the desperate plan to "throw" the race and insure that Yale should win, no matter if the Harvard crew was by far the best, was to remove Winny from Bub's sight.

Bub was the stroke-oar—the winning oar, as he was proudly called by his admirers—and there were many—of the Harvard crew; if Bub was tampered with—we do not mean in a money sense, for Gray knew his cousin well enough to understand that there wasn't gold enough in the world to tempt the stroke-oar to a dishonest action—but if by some accident—some trick he could be removed from his place in the Harvard boat on the day of the race, and the crew be forced to put another man in his seat the chances were ten to one that Harvard, rowing at such a disadvantage, would lose the race.

This was a difficult task, but this was the task that Gray had taken upon himself—the task which he had sworn to accomplish if it was within the power of mortal man to do it.

The second move was to induce Bub to follow the girl to New York; by so doing he would be obliged to neglect his training and so endanger the success of his crew.

The third move we shall see anon, and this was to be the crowning stroke of all.

With Gray's money Milligan purchased a neat, dark suit of clothes, a new shirt, collar and neck-tie, stockings, shoes, hat;—in fact a complete outfit from top to toe, and when he had discarded his rags and donned his new "togs," as he termed them, he made a very respectable appearance.

"Now we'll head-right for Cambridge," Gray said, after the transformation was completed and the disreputable-looking tramp had, by the aid of the great miracle-worker, plenty of money, been made over into quite a decent-looking man. "I want to get the girl away while Bub is absent," Gray explained. "You can say to her that, as the parting will be apt to be very painful, you think it will be better for her to write to him."

"But then he'll know where she is?" Milligan suggested.

"You fool! won't you have the posting of the letters?" Gray asked, tartly.

"My stars! what a head you've got!"

On the way to Cambridge in the horse-car, which happened by the way to be sparingly patronized, Gray took particular care to drill the tramp again into the part which he was to play, and the old scamp, being quick to learn mischief, like all his class, soon convinced the mastermind, that he would not fail in his "trick."

And so about ten o'clock that morning the good doctor, when he heard the door-bell sound and went to admit the visitor, was decidedly astonished to recognize in the well-dressed, well-appearing stranger, the unsavory old tramp whose appearance had kicked up such a bobbery on the previous evening.

"A little joke o' mine," he explained, gravely, to the astonished doctor. "Thank heaven, sir, I am able to care for the gal as she ought to be cared for."

The doctor hastened to tell Winny of the wonderful change in the appearance of Jeremiah Milligan, her long-absent father, and the girl upon entering the parlor where the old man sat trying his best to look respectable, was really surprised, although she had been prepared for the change by the doctor's statement.

Briefly, and as politely and gentlemanly as he possibly could, the old villain related to her the yarn which the wily Mr. Harry Gray had concocted, and the girl accepted it, of course, for literal truth.

A weight was taken off her mind when she discovered that the author of her being was not really a wicked, miserable tramp, the companion of prison-birds and felons, a man who had tasted the hospitalities of nearly every jail in the county.

To her mind there was no disgrace in honest poverty, and when the old man explained that for years he had been connected with training stables devoted to the preparation of fast horses for racing purposes, she no longer wondered at his sometime uncouth sayings, for she understood enough of the world, young as she was, to know that the horseman fraternity almost have a language of their own.

As gently and delicately as possible—just as he had been instructed by Gray—he spoke of the stroke-oar, and hinted that he did not believe in the admiration of that young gentleman, and that as far as he, Mr. Milligan, was concerned, he would be pleased if that gentleman kept himself to himself and troubled not the abode of the Milligans with his presence.

Winny did not attempt to defend her lover's truth, although in her own mind she would as soon believe that the sun would sink some day, never to rise again, as to believe that Bub was not the very soul of honor and truth.

The future, too, now looked a great deal brighter to the girl, for since her father had turned out to be quite a decent sort of man, and there was no taint upon her name, who could tell what the coming days might bring forth, if Bub was the honest and truthful lover which she believed him to be?

Winny demurred at first at the sudden de-

parture, but, after consulting the doctor, took his advice and concluded to go. As he explained to her: "Under the circumstances it is just as well that you should go at once, perhaps a great deal better. You can write, you know."

To tell the truth, the doctor was anxious to see how Lawrence would act. In his heart the old gentleman was somewhat afraid that Bub was inclined to be a little flighty, and that he didn't know his own mind as well as he might; rumors had reached the doctor regarding Bub's flirtations with the innkeeper's daughter, and though he placed little credence in the reports, still he thought that the departure of Winny would give the young man a fine chance to make up his mind, if he did waver at all, between two rival fair ones.

And so Winny departed from the house which had sheltered her for so many years; went forth into that wide world from whence the charity of the good doctor and his wife had snatched her so many years ago.

A poor little lamb, consigned to the care of as remorseless a wolf as ever lapped human blood.

When Bub returned home to dinner and found Winny gone, he stormed terribly.

"It is all a trick," he cried, "to take Winny from me; but I'll baffle the plot; I'll put detectives on the track at once!"

But the doctor persuaded him out of this course by representing its folly.

"Wait patiently for a few days; then she will write; say how she is situated, and you can go and see her, if you like."

Bub finally came to the conclusion that this was the wisest plan, but in regard to the wonderful transformation of the old tramp he was utterly incredulous.

"It is some trick! some trick!" he kept repeating; "that fellow is a villain and a thief! Didn't I have to knock him down twice on the highway before he would give up the gold-piece which he stole from Winny? and they were no love-taps that I gave him, either! I heard his ribs crack the first time, but he was game enough to come for a second dose."

In vain the doctor explained to Bub what Mr. Milligan had explained to him, thanks to crafty Harry Gray's cunning brain, that the attack on the highway was only a device to persuade the two girls that he was nothing but an old tramp, so that he would be received and recognized as such when he came to the house, and that he knew the ladies all the time.

But, to use the language dear to the heart of the police-reporter, the stroke-oar "wouldn't have it at all."

"No, no!" he kept exclaiming; "wait and see that fellow is a rascal! there isn't an honest bone in his body! If I didn't feel sure that Winny is a strong, self-willed, resolute girl when roused, and capable of taking care of herself, I would go in search of her at once!"

And while the stroke-oar was fretting over the girl's departure, never dreaming that it was a blow aimed at himself, Mr. Harry Gray made another move.

CHAPTER XXII.

WEAVING THE WEB.

ABOUT ten o'clock on the next morning Mr. Harry Gray sauntered into the garden of the Woodbine Inn, took a good look around him as though he expected to see some one, and then, with an air of disappointment, seated himself at one of the tables in the little arbors.

The old man came forth to wait upon his guest.

"I expected to see Bub here," Gray explained.

"He has not been here this morning, yet."

"I suppose that I am a little early for him," the young man remarked, carelessly.

"Yes; Mr. Lawrence don't often get here as early as this."

"By the way, Mr. Googage, could you cook me a chop? I was up rather late last night and I had no appetite for breakfast."

The old man shook his head soberly.

"Ah, Mr. Grahame, you ought to take care of yourself, and, begging your pardon, was Mr. Lawrence with you?" The old man appeared to be quite anxious on this point.

"Yes; why do you ask?"

"Because it's against orders, Mr. Grahame," replied the old man, evidently annoyed.

"Against orders?"

"Yes, sir; he's in training now—in training, you know, for the race."

"Oh, a night's fun now and then won't do him any harm!" Gray exclaimed, laughing as if the matter were rather a good joke than otherwise.

Again the old trainer shook his head very gravely.

"Ah, that sort of talk has cost many a good man pretty dear. Why, Mr. Harrison, the training is everything. Put a man in the ring that ain't fit—that's either overtrained or under-trained; or on a track for a race; or in a boat, where for twenty minutes or so he's got to use every pound of strength that he's got; the few ounces of good flesh that he's lost, or the few ounces of useless fat that he's got on him will be mighty apt to fix him so that his backers will look sick afore the thing is over. No, Mr. Harrison, don't you run away with the idea that it

don't make any difference if a man does let up in his training now and then; it's just the ruination of the professional man wot is a-depending on his muscle and his wind for to pull him through; and, Mr. Grahame, you would be a-doing of Mr. Lawrence a service if you were to just to hint to him that this all-night work is the worst thing in the world for him. He's the stroke-oar of the crew, you know, the best man that sits in the boat, and if on the home-stretch he gives out, owing to bad training, why, then the Harvard cake will be all dough."

"Well, I hope not, for I stand to lose about thirty thousand dollars if the right boat don't come in ahead," Gray remarked, in his light and airy way.

"Thirty thousand dollars!" the innkeeper cried, indulging in a prolonged whistle, indicative of great amazement; "why, you don't mean to tell me that you've got that much money on the race?"

"And why not; isn't it a sure thing?"

"Oh, no, Mr. Grahame; there ain't anything sure in this world except death. I've seen so many sure things bust up that I've come to the conclusion that it ain't safe to holler till the event is pulled off."

"But there is no doubt that the Harvard crew are much the best," Gray urged. "Everybody says so, and then, look at the odds that they command in the betting."

"Yes, that's so; and I don't blame the men that's putting up their money to back their opinions; but then, you know, Mr. Harrison, an accident might upset the hull thing. The crew are as good as ever sat in a boat, but then s'pose any one of them should happen to be taken sick, and a fresh man put in, of course the two substitutes are good men, but if Bub don't come to the scratch, where's the man to fill his place?"

"Well, now that you put it in that light, I don't know but that you are right," Gray said, seriously, and speaking as if he had never reflected upon the subject before; he was a perfect master of the art of dissimulation.

"Of course I'm right!" old Googage exclaimed, earnestly, "and, Mr. Grahame, if you don't want to hazard the loss of your money, for Heaven's sake advise Bub not to neglect his training, but to leave no stone unturned for to get himself fit to row for a man's life on the day of the race."

"All right; I will; you can depend upon me! I suppose you have got considerable invested upon the race?"

"Oh, no, Mr. Harrison, not a cent," replied the innkeeper, with a regretful air as if he lamented that such was the fact.

"You astonish me! I had an idea from the opinion that I knew you possessed regarding the crew that you would invest about all you could raise on the event."

"I'm a member of the church, Mr. Grahame, and I tries to live up to it, and I've given up all sich deviltry a long time ago. It ain't no harm for to coach the lads a bit and give 'em a hint or two, but as for betting. Oh! I'm dead ag'in' it!"

The young man laughed.

"Well, every man to his thinking, but I say, just hurry up that chop; talking has made me thirsty as well as hungry, and bring me a bottle of your ginger ale, too."

"Yes, sir, directly; I'll set Kitty to work on the chop, right away; she'll serve it, sir, as I hope you'll excuse me, seeing as I've got to go down to the 'port on a leetle matter of business?"

"Certainly."

This was exactly what the astute Mr. Gray wanted. He had no expectation whatever of meeting Bub at the Woodbine Inn, but he had come expressly to get an interview with the girl.

He had started the old tramp on his errand to remove one of the girls who had attracted the fancy of the stroke-oar, and now he himself was about to try a certain plan upon the other.

The tramp business was move No. 1, and this was move No. 2.

"She'll serve it in a jiffy!" And then the old man hurried into the house to give the necessary orders.

"Everything goes on splendidly!" Gray muttered to himself, complacently. "I shall succeed, I am sure of it! This girl must get out of this. I want her in New York where she can serve my purpose as a lode-stone to attract my dear cousin, old Harvard's winning oar, as they term him, but I'll bet a trifle that in his next race, whether he sits in the boat or out of it, his crew will not come in ahead."

Old Googage again emerged from the cottage.

"You'll be served in a few minutes, sir, and I hope you'll excuse me?" he said.

"Oh, yes."

The innkeeper departed, and hardly had he disappeared down the street before the girl came from the house with the ginger ale.

"Will you have your chops here, sir?" she asked.

"Yes, if you please, and are you going to cook it?"

"Yes, sir."

"They would never believe this in New York

if I were to tell them, would they?" he exclaimed.

A shade of annoyance passed over the pretty face of the girl.

"Ah, but I hope that you will not tell them," she replied. "I trust that you will keep my secret there as well as here."

"Oh, you can rely implicitly upon my discretion."

"But I say, wouldn't you like to have Bub know your true position in the world?" the tempter asked, insidiously.

The girl colored up for a moment; the bare mention of the stroke-oar's name always brought the tell-tale blood into her cheeks.

"Why, what difference should it make to me?" she asked.

"Oh, come! why do you beat about the bush?" he replied. "Do you think that I am blind—do you think that I hav'n't known of the flirtation which has been going on between you and my cousin? Why it is all over town that he is over head and ears in love with you."

"In love with Doctor Peabody's daughter, you mean," she retorted, two bright pink spots appearing in her cheeks, "and what chance do I stand—I, the innkeeper's daughter, against that young lady?"

The girl spoke bitterly, and she glanced down with a scornful air at the common print dress she wore.

"Aha! I see that you hav'n't heard the news."

"What news?" she asked.

"About the young lady who was supposed to be the doctor's daughter."

"Supposed to be! Why, is there any doubt about it?"

"Well, yes, rather, considering that an aged tramp, who rejoices in the name of Jerry Miligan, has made his appearance, and claimed the girl as his child!"

"Why, it is just like a story!" she exclaimed.

"And does the doctor admit that the man's claim is correct?"

"Oh, yes; and, what is more, he has yielded the girl to his care, and by this time she is on the way to her new home."

"And where is that? do you know?" The girl was curious regarding her rival.

"Oh, yes; Boston, I believe, is where the old wretch lives; and so, you see, at one sudden and unexpected blow poor Winifred is hurled to poverty and disgrace."

"Disgrace!"

"Yes, that is the proper word; this new-found father is a regular old rascal; no first-class scoundrel, you know, who has thrived by his roguery, but a mean, vulgar, old tramp, who has probably seen the inside of more prisons than he has fingers and toes."

The girl was silent for a few moments, evidently meditating deeply upon this startling and unexpected news, and Gray watched her narrowly, a cunning look in his shrewd eyes.

"It must have been a dreadful blow to the poor girl," she said, at last.

"Yes, it was, and a dreadful blow to Lawrence, too."

"And—and what does he think of it?" she asked. "I should thought that if he cared for her he would have at once volunteered to take her away from the life of misery to which she is evidently doomed unless some friendly hand is outstretched to save her."

"So he did, and the old tramp eagerly jumped at the chance to sell the girl, but she, as proud as a tragedy queen, spurned the offer. She plainly told Bub before all of us there that there was now a gulf between them that could not be spanned, and that henceforth they would be as strangers to each other."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Kate, in wonder.

"Yes, and now comes your chance! Be guided by me, and I'll engage that in less than a month Bub shall be at your feet!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

BUB'S DECISION.

THE interview at this point was suddenly interrupted. Bub came strolling along up the street, both hands in his pockets, and with his eyes bent upon the ground.

"There he is now!" Kitty exclaimed, her quick eyes catching sight of the handsome stroke-oar.

"And he's coming to see you, too! I'll lay a hundred dollars to an orange that he won't pass without coming in."

"Oh no; he never comes here in the morning!" protested the girl, with trembling lips, her face alternately turning pale and red as the hot blood coursed through her veins.

"The other woman being gone he comes to you; but, be off with you! It won't do to let him even suspect that we are on such intimate terms."

The girl obeyed the command at once and hastened into the house, a prey to conflicting emotions.

Was it really true then that the handsome young fellow cared for her—he, one of the first of the Boston gentlemen and she so far below him in the social scale?

"Ah! if he only knew who and what I really am!" she murmured. "If he only knew of the

position and the money that I have gained solely through my own unaided efforts! but, perhaps, like my parents, he would regard my struggles and success as being more of a disgrace than anything else."

She seated herself in the kitchen by one of the windows which commanded a view of the little arbor wherein Grahame was seated, drew the blinds together, so as to conceal herself, and then through the crevices watched for the coming of the man whom she liked with a feeling akin to idolatry.

Grahame chuckled quietly to himself as the girl retreated in such hot haste.

"Puppets all! creatures made of straw!" he exclaimed, contemptuously, "and how they dance at my command, and yet these poor fools think that they have brains!"

And after this reflection he proceeded to attack the chop, utterly ignoring the near approach of Lawrence, for it was no part of his game to let the stroke-oar suspect that he was on the watch for him.

In truth when Lawrence quitted the house of the old doctor after learning of Winifred's departure, it was with no settled purpose; his brain was in a whirl, and he only desired to get out into the air.

Mechanically he had turned his steps in the direction of the Woodbine Inn, and no thoughts of the innkeeper's daughter were in his mind.

He was restless and unhappy, and, like all vigorous minds, he chafed against the misfortune which had overtaken him, and could not bear to sit down in quiet and think the matter over.

No, he must have exercise; he must be up and doing or else the suspense would be too much for him to bear.

"That old wretch, her father?" he had muttered a hundred times as he paced along. "It is not possible. Winny is a lady—a perfect lady; like produces like; grapes grow not upon thistles; there is some horrible mistake about the matter. The doctor has been deceived in some way, but I will learn the truth!"

As we have said, for a hundred times at least he had muttered this resolution, and at the end of the speech every time he had raised his eyes and glared around him as though he expected to find some one to combat his idea; and this time as he looked defiantly about him, his gaze fell upon Grahame, busily engaged in disposing of the chop and apparently utterly unconscious that any soul of his acquaintance was in the neighborhood.

"Hallo! there's Harry!" the stroke-oar exclaimed. "He's a sharp fellow. I've a good mind to ask his advice about the matter."

Bub halted and surveyed the premises.

"I wonder if Kitty is anywhere about?" he murmured. "Perhaps this blow that has fallen upon me is a judgment because I allowed my foolish fancy to rest upon the girl when I was really about as good as engaged to the other one. Well, the punishment is severe enough. I can't understand the fascination that this Kitty exercises over me when I am in her presence. When I am away from her it doesn't exist. She is no more to me then than any other girl. It's lucky for me, perhaps, that this love for Winny is so strong within my heart or else some day I might be tempted to make a fool of myself on account of this barmaid. Hang me! if I ain't sometimes as weak and unstable in my fancies as a love-sick girl!"

And while Bub was muttering these reflections to himself he had halted by the gate and had rested his hand upon the fence.

Kitty, from her ambush in the window—which also commanded a view of the front gate, being situated in the little ell of the cottage—had watched the movements of the stroke-oar with feverish impatience.

"Will he pass by, or will he come in?" she muttered. "Oh, what a fool I am to love this man as I do!" Then she cried, enraged at herself: "And the chances are that he does not, nor ever will, care anything for me; but he must—he shall!"

The words came with fiery vehemence from her lips, and her eyes sparkled while every nerve in her body quivered.

The girl was terribly excited.

"Do not pass!" she exclaimed, "do not pass! if you love me, come in! yield to the power which, with all my heart, I am striving to exercise over you!"

Of course the invocation was not uttered in tones loud enough to reach the ears of the young man, and was merely the outburst of the moment, but it seemed as if some good, or evil genius—it was difficult to say which—had carried the meaning of the excited speech to the stroke-oar, for he suddenly placed his hand on the latch of the gate, and lifting it, entered the garden.

Over the heart of the girl came a great swell of joy.

"He does love me!" she cried, still communing with herself. "He is not deaf to my appeal and I shall yet win him, despite all the world!"

In truth it was a strange coincidence, but it was the presence of Harrison Grahame in the garden, rather than any subtle power exercised

over him by the love-sick innkeeper's daughter, which impelled the stroke-oar to act as he did.

Just as the girl spoke he had caught sight of his cousin ensconced in the arbor, and in his present mood he craved company.

Man is a gregarious animal and invariably seeks another one of his species to share either his joys or his sorrows.

Bub proceeded directly to the summer-house, of course totally unsuspecting of the presence of the girl behind the window-blind, who was so eagerly watching.

Grahame had kept a corner of his eye upon the stroke-oar, and he, too, had muttered an invocation as he noticed the young man halt at the garden gate.

"Come in, old man," he muttered, "come in and walk blindly into the snare which I have so cunningly laid for you. Come in, you who are so superior to me in all the gifts that men count as great in this world! come in and see how, with the cunning which the devil has planted in my heart, I will overthrow you, great and gifted as you are! See how I will despoil you and deliver you, bound hand and foot, into the power of the Egyptians!"

The frank and open-hearted stroke-oar had very little idea of the true sentiments of the black sheep, whom he really liked despite his knowledge of his questionable practices.

Men with the peculiar nature of the stroke-oar are always large in charity.

When Bub got half-way up the walk Grahame lifted his head and pretended to see him for the first time.

"Hallo, Otis! is that you?" he exclaimed.

"Yes," responded the Harvard lad, and helping himself to a chair he sat down on the other side of the table.

"What's the matter? you look out of sorts," Grahame inquired.

"Well, I feel deucedly bad!"

"You look it," Grahame rejoined; "but, old fellow, what is out of joint? Any of the crew gone amiss?"

"Oh, no, fortune be thanked, they are all right; it is a private matter which concerns myself alone."

"Ah, 'a fell grief due to some single breast,' eh?"

"Yes; do you know one Jerry Milligan?"

"Very well indeed," the other replied, assuming a look of surprise which was extremely natural.

"Well, Harry, that old scoundrel has turned out to be Winny's father!"

"Oh, impossible!"

"Indeed it's the truth; let me tell you all about it."

And then Bub related in detail all that had transpired upon the previous evening when the old tramp had claimed the girl for his daughter, and Grahame listened as eagerly as though every single particular of the tale was new and strange to him.

"Well, what do you think of it?" Bub asked, as he concluded.

"I can hardly believe it!" was the trickster's extremely natural reply.

"Oh, there's no doubt about it at all, and he has taken Winny away with him to New York. What sort of a man is this Milligan? He professes to be in your service."

"He never was, except for some rather dirty pieces of work that a better man wouldn't have done. You know if you go on the turf, Otis, you must do as the turfites do," he said, in conclusion, as if to excuse his acquaintance with the fellow.

"Oh, yes, I understand all about that, and it has always been a puzzle to me how you ever got mixed up with such rascals!" the stroke-oar exclaimed, bluntly.

Grahame rather winced at the plain-spoken speech.

"Well, there are a great many gentlemen connected with it, too, you must remember."

"Yes, I presume so, but I can't understand it; but about this Milligan; he's a regular old scoundrel, isn't he?"

"Well, yes, that is about the reputation that he bears."

"And to think that Winny, young, pure and innocent, has gone with him, blindly trusting to this wretch!"

"Why not go after her?" Grahame suggested, craftily.

"By Jove, I will!" Lawrence cried, jumping at the idea. "Will you come with me?"

"Certainly, old fellow!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

STARTING THE MACHINERY.

"WE will start at once!" Bub was as eager to get off as the hound tugging at the leash with the scent of game in his nostrils.

"Give me half an hour, or an hour," Grahame said. "I've a little business to arrange in Boston. But, I say, can you go to New York now? How about your training?"

"Oh, that's all right. The crew leave for New London to-morrow, and I can run up from the city every now and then."

Grahame shook his head gravely.

"Take care, old fellow," he said; "you

mustn't do anything to endanger the race; your crew must win, you know."

"Oh, that's all right!" Bub repeated, impatiently; like all strong, willful men he was not disposed to be turned from his purpose, and was always inclined to be more headstrong than usual and less liable to listen to reason when his good sense told him that he was acting heedlessly.

Grahame was an excellent judge of character; and then, too, for years he had made it his business to study his cousin like a book, because, for a very long time he had cherished a resentment against him and had waited patiently for the moment to come when he could catch the prosperous, lucky, happy stroke-oar upon the hip and then feed fat the ancient grudge he owed him.

The wily trickster saw that Lawrence was determined to follow the absent girl to the city, and he knew Bub's nature quite well enough to understand that a few timely words of remonstrance would only serve to make him still more determined in his purpose, and at the same time the oarsman would be impressed with the belief that the speaker was really and truly a friend.

"Very well, you know best, of course," Grahame remarked, "but not for the world would I see you do anything to put in hazard the race. I don't speak in this way because I have invested heavily upon the result, but because I want to see your crew win."

"Of course, of course!" Lawrence exclaimed, firmly believing that the words of the speaker were free from guile. "I know that, heart and soul, you are for the crimson handkerchiefs; but don't be afraid; we'll win the race; there is no doubt at all about it; but I must go to New York. I can't stay here; there are reasons which I can't explain very well—" and here the speaker hesitated and glanced toward the cottage—"reasons which compel me to go."

How plain it all was to the wily Mr. Harrison Gray! He understood it all just as well as though the stroke-oar had unburdened his heart and made him a confidant of its secrets.

He was afraid to remain in Cambridge now that Winifred had gone away, because he dreaded the fascinations of the innkeeper's daughter. Strong, resolute and self-willed among men, yet in regard to these two girls he was as weak and unstable as wax. He knew his weakness, and was determined to conquer it by fleeing beyond the siren's influence.

And the plotter chuckled in his sleeve when he reflected that, thanks to his machinations, the flight to New York instead of averting the danger to which the oarsman felt that he was exposed would only carry him straight into the toils of the temptress.

"There's an express at one or two this afternoon; suppose we take that?" Grahame suggested.

"All right. I'll meet you at the depot at a quarter before one; we can easily kill time for an hour if the leaving time is two."

"Very well; that will suit; I'll be there."

Bub rose to depart.

"It will give me plenty of time to go around and see the boys and explain matters to them. I expect that they will be annoyed, and possibly think that I am hazarding the success of the race; but it is of no use! I can't stand the suspense! I must go off—I must do something or else I shall go crazy. Take care of yourself!" and thus abruptly the stroke-oar took his departure, much to the disappointment of the girl who, with eager eyes, had watched every movement of the handsome fellow whom she loved with the strength of a passionate woman's devotion.

With a quiet smile upon his face Grahame saw the stroke-oar depart.

"Puppets all—puppets all," he muttered. "I pull the wires and they dance. The crimson handkerchiefs will not win this race, my gentle cousin, and after the struggle is over, with one accord the world will say that it was all your fault."

By this time Bub had disappeared from sight, and Kitty came eagerly from the house; she found it impossible to restrain her curiosity.

Grahame understood what the girl wanted.

"He is going to New York," he answered at once.

"To New York!" The intelligence fell upon her like a blow.

"Yes, after the girl."

"After the girl!" Kitty murmured, mechanically, a look of blank despair upon her beautiful face.

"Yes, just for the moment he is crazy after her, and nothing will content but a wild-geese chase to the city."

"And she is not there, is she?" Kitty cried.

"You told me that she had gone East."

"So she has," Grahame replied, unblushingly.

"But he thinks that she is in New York?"

"Yes."

"And if he goes there he will not find her?"

"Exactly."

"But, what does it matter to me?" the girl exclaimed, despondently, "whether he finds her or not; his heart is devoted to her."

"Ah, my dear Miss Kitty, men's hearts are

very queer articles," he replied, with his light, mocking laugh. "Just now he is really crazy after this girl, and he is determined to find her and so he runs off to New York; and then there is another reason why he flies from Cambridge, and you are mixed up with that."

"I!" exclaimed Kitty, in wonder.

"Yes; for the last few weeks—in fact, ever since you came to Cambridge and Bub made your acquaintance—his heart has been a battleground, whereon your influence and hers contended. When he is with you he likes you the best; when he is with her, he forgets you; now that she is gone he is afraid to remain here lest your spells prove too powerful for him."

"Why should he be afraid if, as you say, he cares for me?" she demanded.

"My dear Miss Kitty, just consider the difference in your positions," Grahame said, in his coolly easy way.

"Yes, yes, I know that! I am a fool ever to forget it! but this girl, the daughter of a miserable old tramp, is she any better, or is she as good as I am?"

"No; at present you have the advantage most decidedly. And that is where the trouble comes in at present. My cousin is an extremely honorable and peculiarly sensitive man. He has paid this girl marked attention—"

"And so he has me!" interrupted Kitty, quickly. "But of course I understand; there is a vast difference between whispering compliments in the ears of Doctor Peabody's daughter and saying the same thing to Kitty Googage, the child of the man who keeps the Woodbine Inn."

"Yes, but if he knew you in your true station—in the position which you have so brilliantly won with no aid except the genius and the gifts which nature has bestowed upon you—"

"Ah, but would he think any better of me? Would he not yield to the prejudices that the world has borne ever since the dark ages? Why I do not dare to let even my own parents know how I gain a living! They imagine that I am employed in a millinery store on Broadway, and I am sure that they would rather starve than touch a penny of my earnings if they knew how I gained them."

"You don't astonish me in the least," Grahame replied. "From what I know of your worthy father, and the old lady, your mother, I should have expected that they would hold just such views. Persons in the lower ranks of life, and not possessed of much culture or education, when they get religion generally get it *bad*, and their faith is of that peculiar nature that leads them to think evil of everybody who doesn't think exactly as they do. Your bigot is always the blindest and most obstinate of men. But now, you must consider the difference between your parents, with their narrow, shallow views, and such a man as Otis Lawrence—broad-minded, cultured and refined. Look over the history of the talented women of the old world! See how many of them from a poor and lowly station fought their way, not only to fame, which is easily acquired if the demand is just, but to a high social position, which is more difficult to gain, and across the water the social lines are much more strongly and distinctly drawn than in our Republic. How many brilliant women have won coronets and titles!"

The girl fixed her eyes sharply upon the speaker for a moment, and the crafty Mr. Gray instantly perceived that he had awakened her suspicions.

"Why do you interest yourself in this matter?" she asked, abruptly.

"Aha! you are suspicious!" he exclaimed, laughing. "Well, then, listen to my confession: I want my cousin to marry you, for I want Winifred myself!"

"Ah!" The girl believed the statement.

"I will help you and so help myself, but you will not win, for you have a most difficult game to play, unless you follow my instructions to the letter."

"I will do so!" she replied, promptly.

"Well, then, away with you to New York: assume your other character and prepare yourself to be introduced to Bud."

"I will go to-night."

"Good! and within a week I'll engage that you shall see that success is certain."

A few more words of light import and the interview terminated. The machinery of the plot was fairly started.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE QUEEN OF SONG.

IN New York the two young men went to the same hotel, the palatial Fifth Avenue, and after supper they proceeded to the main entrance, and lighting their cigars, joined the throng who were lounging in and around the doorway.

"What a busy place this New York is!" Lawrence remarked, idly, his eyes wandering over the apparently unending stream of people passing up and down, but it was plain from the expression upon his features that his thoughts were far away.

"Yes, and by the way, I have an appointment this evening," Harrison observed, abruptly. "It nearly slipped my memory."

"An appointment?"

"Yes, I promised to call at once upon my return to the city. Are you acquainted with Mademoiselle Paulina?"

The stroke-oar shook his head.

"I do not think that I am, although the name sounds familiar to me."

"Oh, you must have heard of the lady; Mademoiselle Paulina is the famous vocalist, the very queen of beauty and of song."

"Yes, I think that I have noticed her name in the newspapers."

"And is it possible that you have never seen her?" Grahame asked, assuming an air of astonishment that was extremely natural. The man was a born actor, and on the mimic stage undoubtedly would have won great triumphs.

"Such is the fact, I rarely go to public entertainments; I have very little taste for such things."

"Come with me to-night and I will introduce you to this siren."

"Siren!" Bub exclaimed, rather astonished at the unusual warmth of Grahame's speech.

"Yes, siren; that is her proper title, and if you do not own that it is, after a brief interview with her, I will agree to stand a wine supper for yourself and any half-dozen of your friends that you may choose to name."

"But will the—siren—be graciously pleased to indulge me with an interview?" Lawrence asked, his curiosity somewhat excited by the words of the schemer.

"Oh, yes; I will introduce you!" Grahame responded, at once; "these children of genius are not hemmed in and about with quite so many decorous barriers as encompass their less fortunate sisters. I am quite intimately acquainted with the song-bird and will introduce you. Come along and we will go there at once."

"All right, I'm with you," Bub replied, yielding to the impulse of the moment.

So the two young men left the hotel and sallied forth.

"Which way?" asked the stroke-oar, as they emerged from the portal.

"Up Broadway," Grahame replied. "She resides in a sort of a private hotel, on Thirtieth street, much affected by the artist world. Within the modest confines of that five-story brownstone front you will find the rising painter, the aspiring poet, the successful tragedian, the queen of poetry of motion, the sweet singer who nightly charms the opera-loving world as well as the mystic brothers of the famous press-gang, who, with a single touch of their pens, make or mar the reputation of those bold souls who pant for a public life."

"It is to a great center of the Bohemian world, then, that I am to be introduced?"

"Exactly; and I can assure you, old fellow, that I am offering you a chance worth accepting!" Grahame exclaimed, with a light laugh.

The two friends were strolling along, arm-in-arm up Broadway, as they conversed.

"I am highly favored, then?"

"By Jove! you never said a truer word! Why, this girl is the rage, and has been so ever since she came to the city. I've known some of the gayest young bloods of the town try all sorts of games to procure an introduction, but she is very particular, and for a woman in public life bears a wonderful reputation. Of course all the daughters of genius, who expose themselves to the fierce glare of the sun of public approval, are talked about more or less. It is a price that they must pay for the fame and wealth which they acquire so easily and with so little toil."

"Is she pretty?"

"A beauty!" Grahame exclaimed, enthusiastically.

"And talented?"

"She has the voice of an angel!"

"I am not very well acquainted with that sort of thing," Bub remarked, quietly.

"Just wait until you see this girl, and if you don't bow down in idolatry before her then I miss my guess."

Bub's lip curled slightly, and an incredulous look came over his handsome face. Just then the image of his lost Winnie was fresh in his memory, and he doubted the power of woman-kind to efface the impression. One siren only had he ever met in this world, and he did not believe that another existed. Kitty Googage, the innkeeper's daughter, was a siren indeed, and when he was in her presence he found it almost impossible to resist the spells which she cast over him, but she was far away, and with absence the charm faded. He had crossed the running water, which, as in the ancient legend, broke the spell.

Chatting together in a bantering fashion the pair soon reached Thirtieth street and turned into it from Broadway.

In the center of the block Grahame halted before a handsome brown-stone front house.

"This is our destination," he said; "and now, before we enter the charmed portal, supposing that you fall under the spells of this marvelous beauty you are not to blame me, but, for I have given you fair warning."

"Oh, I will hold you blameless," Bub replied.

"It's quite a serious matter introducing such a dashing blade as yourself to this queen of

song. Who knows what serious consequences may result from it?"

"Oh, nonsense! go ahead!"

"I warn you, remember!"

"Oh, on my head be it!" Bub replied, lightly.

The stroke-oar little guessed the nature of the tangled path into which his feet were straying so recklessly.

Grahame advanced up the steps and rung the bell, Bub following close behind.

An elderly colored man answered the bell and from the look upon his face as he perceived Grahame it was plain that the Bostonian was no stranger to him.

"Is Mademoiselle Paulina at home, Jim?" he asked.

"Yes, sah."

"Carry up my card, please," and Grahame placed one of his pasteboards in the hand of the servant.

"Yes, sah; walk in, gentlemen, to de parlor."

The servant ushered the twain into the reception-room and then departed.

The parlor was nicely furnished and only differed from the usual reception-room common to similar houses of its class in having the walls profusely adorned with portraits of all the artistic celebrities of the day.

Lawrence examined them with considerable curiosity, and Grahame, who was well acquainted with all of them by sight, and with the greater part personally, took upon himself the task of enlightening his less learned companion.

Bub listened patiently as Grahame descanted first on one picture and then on another, enlivening his discourse every now and then with some choice bit of scandal regarding the originals of some of the pictures.

"You are well posted," Bub observed at last.

"Oh, yes, I'm up to all that's going, as the saying is," Grahame replied, complacently.

The rustle of a woman's dress sounded in the entry just then; the young men turned; a tall, beautiful girl with lustrous, golden hair, magnificently dressed, came sweeping into the apartment, and then came a sudden and startling tableau.

No sooner had the lady caught sight of the faces of the gentlemen than a cry of astonishment came from her lips and she started back utterly amazed.

And as for Bub Lawrence, upon Grahame's whispering in his ear, "Here she is," he had in curiosity turned to see the famous siren, but the moment his eyes fell upon her face he re-echoed the cry which had been forced from her lips by the sudden and unexpected encounter.

Grahame was the only one of the three that was not completely taken by surprise, although he followed suit and pretended to be.

This woman—this magnificent creature—this Mademoiselle Paulina, who with her wonderful voice as well as by the grace of her person and the exceeding beauty of her face, this queen of genius, rich in all the gifts that fame and wealth could give, was no other than the innkeeper's daughter, plain Kitty Googage.

No wonder that the stroke-oar was amazed at the wonderful and unexpected transformation! Never before in all his life had he been so thoroughly and utterly astounded.

For a moment he could hardly believe the evidence of his eyesight, and he blinked and stared like an owl suddenly brought from the darkness of an obscure nook into the light.

But, there was no mistake; Kitty Googage the Cambridge girl and the sweet-voiced siren, Mademoiselle Paulina were one and the same.

CHAPTER XXVI.

PAULINA'S STORY.

"HALLO! hallo!" cried Grahame, in apparent amazement; "are you two people acquainted with each other?"

The exclamation in a measure recalled the pair to their senses.

"Yes, I have had the pleasure of seeing the lady before," Bub replied, very ill at ease, and his mind still in a fog as to the wonderful transformation which had changed the poor and lowly innkeeper's daughter into this gorgeous lady, brave in silken attire.

"Oh, I see!" Grahame exclaimed; "you did not recognize an old acquaintance by the name, for I shrewdly guess, mademoiselle, that your name is but a *nom-de-theatre*, eh?"

"Yes," the girl replied.

"It is really an odd thing, when you come to think of it," Grahame continued. "I brought Mr. Lawrence up here on purpose to give him the pleasure of making your acquaintance and here you suddenly recognize each other as old friends. Well, well, it is odd!"

The stroke-oar cast a searching glance into the face of the other. Was it possible, he thought that Grahame did not know that this queen of song, this lady who, on the mimic stage, had fascinated both old and young New York, was only the bar-maid of the village ale-house, old Ben Googage's daughter? It might be so. Grahame rarely visited Cambridge, and the chances were a hundred to one that he had never happened to see the girl. He must be careful, then, not to betray her secret.

And Kitty, too, on her part, had favored the arch-plotter with an earnest look. She under-

stood only too well that Grahame knew who and what she was, and now she asked herself the question—Why and for what object had he brought Bub Lawrence into her presence and thus rudely torn away the veil of secrecy with which she had enshrouded herself? For no good purpose, she was sure, for in her heart she distrusted the wily and smooth-spoken "Harry Gray," although to save her life, she could not have given good and sufficient reasons for the odd feeling; but women are creatures of instinct; they yield blindly to a whim and do not seek to fortify their actions by logical reasonings.

But Grahame, with a smile "that was child-like and bland," beamed upon them both, and if he had dark and deep designs buried within his heart, no trace of them could be discerned in his face.

"By Jove! it is about as odd a thing as I ever remember!" Grahame continued; "and since you are old acquaintances, I trust you will both excuse me for a few minutes while I run upstairs to Signor Bilatka's sanctum. The signor is the coming pianist of the age, Bub, and I take a wonderful interest in him. I'll be back in fifteen minutes—adieu!" And then Grahame bowed himself out of the room, much to the relief of both of the others, for in truth they were terribly embarrassed, and in the presence of a third party an explanation was not possible.

After the departure of Grahame the girl sunk into the nearest chair with a sigh of relief.

Bub for a moment remained motionless, a bewildered look upon his face.

Once again he was in the presence of the siren whom he had sworn to avoid; once again he was exposed to the fascinations of the woman who exercised such a strange influence over him. Was that influence to be for good or evil? Ah! that remained to be seen, and yet there was a subtle suspicion lurking within the young man's heart that his intimacy with the girl could result in nothing but evil.

As we have said, for a moment he stood motionless as a rooted tree and gazed earnestly into the lovely face of the girl. He had thought that she was a charming creature when dressed in the plainest attire, as became the bar-maid of the Woodbine Inn, the daughter of old Ben Googage; but now that he beheld her tricked out in all the finery dear to the heart of woman-kind—robed in silks and laces—diamonds adorning her delicate ears—her tawny hair looped here and there with precious gems—her person embellished with all the tricks and devices common to the belle of the period, he thought that his eyes had never beheld a more beautiful woman.

Again the subtle spells of the charming girl were stealing over him, binding him hand and foot in a silk-like chain, apparently as fragile as the airy web of the spider-king, and yet in reality as strong as the massive links of the manacled prisoner's chain.

"You are surprised to see me, no doubt," she said, looking straight into his face and smilingly inviting him to approach.

"Yes," he replied; and, unable to resist the charm, he advanced to her side and seated himself so near to her that he had but to reach out his hand to touch her.

"No more surprised, though, than I am to behold you, for you are the very last person in this world that I expected to see."

"But explain this mystery: who and what are you?"

"I am Mademoiselle Paulina, the bright, particular star of the Alhambra Music Hall, in 14th street," she replied, firmly, but with anxious eyes fixed upon the face of the young man, eager to witness the effect of the speech.

"The Alhambra Music Hall?" he murmured.

"Yes, where I nightly sing; I am a vocalist by profession and I command the highest salary given to any artist who treads the boards of a music hall. As you can plainly see, I lead a double life:—when I am home with my parents, I am plain Kitty Googage, but here, in New York, over a certain circle I reign as queen, with none to dispute my sway, and I am known as Mademoiselle Paulina."

There was an air of bravado plainly apparent both in the girl's voice and manner. She feared the effects of the disclosure, but she had resolved to make the best of it.

In brief she intimated—I am so and so, I am not ashamed of it, although perhaps you may think that I have cause to be ashamed.

To tell the truth Lawrence hardly knew what to make of the matter. He was so much surprised by the disclosure that he hardly knew what to think. He had not a very high opinion of the "bright particular stars" of the music halls. He had come in contact with two or three of them, and not one of them had impressed him favorably.

"My parents do not know what I am doing," the girl continued, rapidly, determined that he should know the whole story. "They have a holy horror of the stage and all that belongs to it. I assist them out of my earnings, but they would turn from the money in horror if they only knew how I gained it. In fact I really believe that they would rather accept money gained by downright theft than the gains of the stage, as they consider it an abomination."

"How did you happen to enter upon this life?" Bub asked, his curiosity excited.

"Ever since I was a child I had been noted for my excellent voice. I have often been told by good judges that if I had had proper instructions I would have made a great opera singer. My father was in difficulties; his inn was not paying and he expected to lose it and with it all his little savings which he had invested in it. I resolved to use the talents which Heaven had given me, secretly and unknown to my folks. I made the attempt, and succeeded. The public that I sing to is an easily satisfied monster, my audience do not demand cultivation so much as voice and style, both of which the world says I have. My folks think that I am the forewoman of a millinery store on Broadway—that I receive an excellent salary, and that the money I send to them is my surplus earnings. The cheat is not likely to be discovered, for this blonde hair and the glamour of the stage almost defy recognition; and, besides, there is no sum of money in this world that would tempt either my father or mother to go inside the walls of a theater."

"This sounds more like a romance than reality," Bub observed, thoughtfully.

"And is all the romance of the world confined to the pages of the novelist?" she exclaimed. "Do not believe it! The mind of man cannot invent wilder deeds than the will of man can perform. The romance of fiction is weak indeed compared to the romance of society."

"Yes, that is truth itself."

The appearance of Grahame at this moment interrupted the interview.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE BLACK SHEEP'S PLAN.

"THE signor is out of humor to-night!" Grahame exclaimed, in his gay, volatile way. "Some of the critics have been scoring him with a merciless pen, and he is talking wildly of pistols and coffee."

"The life of an artist is not always in the sunshine," the girl remarked.

"By the way, Otis, I have a little business at the club to attend to this evening, and so, with your permission, I will tear myself away. The affair had nearly slipped my memory," Grahame announced.

But the stroke-oar was in no mood to stay longer in the dangerous company of the siren. The charm was not yet complete, and he had strength enough to withdraw.

"I will accompany you, Harrison, and at some future time will again have the pleasure of calling upon Miss—" Kitty, he was just about to say, but checked himself just in time.

"Paulina," added Grahame, laughingly, "I think that I can guess there is a little secret between you two, but I will not attempt to share it!"

A puzzled look appeared on the girl's face for a moment. She did not understand Grahame's game; it was evident, though, that he wished to keep Bub in ignorance of the fact that he too knew her as Kitty, the barmaid of the Woodbine Inn, in fair Cambridge town.

The girl was somewhat annoyed at the departure of the stroke-oar, but she skillfully concealed it and bid him farewell with her sweetest smile, and urged him, with almost unmaidenly persistence, to call again, and soon.

The cousins walked up the street toward Broadway, Lawrence dull and gloomy, a sense of impending evil hovering in his mind, while Grahame, on the contrary, was unusually merry.

"By Jove! she is a superb girl, eh, Bub?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, a very fine girl," the stroke-oar responded, slowly, his face strangely sad for one of his usual high spirits.

"Yes, sir, a superb girl! I've seen a great many in my time, but this charming creature is a cut above them all. Why, she has the air of a duchess."

"And yet she is only—" the daughter of the keeper of a common drinking saloon, Bub was about to say, but checked himself just in time to preserve the secret.

"Only a singing-girl, eh?" Grahame continued, taking up the broken sentence. "Well, that's very true, but she makes a princely income out of her talents. Have you any idea what she makes in the course of a year?"

"Not the slightest." And in truth the stroke-oar might have added, neither did he care.

"Well, sir, not less than five thousand dollars! What do you think of that?"

"A good income."

"Yes, but I say, Bub, I was quite astonished when I discovered that you and Mademoiselle Paulina had met before."

"Was you?"

"Yes, and I say, old fellow—of course it is none of my business—but aren't you and she pretty well acquainted?"

"Yes."

"I'll bet a trifle that there has been a love affair between you two!"

"Why should you think so?" Lawrence asked, rather annoyed at the idea.

"Guessed it from the way she looked at you," Grahame replied, laughing. "Oh, I've a rare eye to detect that sort of thing!"

"Harrison, don't you know who this girl really is?" Bub asked, abruptly.

"No, of course not; how should I? but you do, though."

"Yes, I do," Lawrence admitted, slowly.

"Well, I won't pry into the secret; only all I've got to say is that if you want the girl she's yours; I feel satisfied in regard to that."

"Nonsense."

"Oh, it's the truth, and you know it, old fellow."

"Don't say anything more about the subject, it is distasteful to me."

"All right."

And so the conversation ended.

The two went to the club, spent the evening there, and then returned to their hotel.

Bub's slumbers were restless and uneasy that night; and two fair faces haunted him, while Grahame, on the contrary, slept like a top. His plans were progressing well, and he felt sure that he would ultimately triumph.

In the morning Grahame excused himself to his cousin under the pretense that he had some important business to attend to, and immediately sought the presence of the lady who in such a strange manner played two such different roles in the drama of life.

Grahame sent up his card and craved the favor of a private interview with the queen of song.

The lady was at home, and immediately came down.

Right in the rear of the main parlor was a little private one, and in it "Mademoiselle Paulina" received her visitor.

"No doubt you are surprised at my request for a private interview," Grahame began, "but I assure you that I desire to see you upon most important business."

"I am ready to listen, sir," the girl replied, coldly. She had taken a dislike to this wily Mr. "Harry Gray," although for the life of her she could not have told why.

"Now I am about to speak upon a most delicate matter, and I beg that you will not be offended if I speak plainly."

"Go on, sir," she said, quietly.

"You are desperately in love with my cousin, Otis Lawrence."

The girl started, crimsoned to her temples, for the speech was totally unexpected.

"And he, in a measure, is fascinated by you."

"Cease, sir, I beg!" Kitty exclaimed, rising in agitation.

"Oh, but you must hear me!" Grahame cried.

"I will not hear you!" she replied, vehemently.

"The happiness of your whole life depends upon it!"

"My happiness?"

"Yes; you love Bub, and he can be made to love you!"

"To love me?" The girl was amazed.

"Yes; I can arrange the matter."

"I cannot understand how that can be."

"I cannot very well explain it now; all I can say is that I can arrange the matter."

"You will excuse me, sir, if I doubt your power," Kitty exclaimed, with quite a haughty accent. She resented the man's interference.

"Doubt all you like; I don't object to that!"

Grahame answered, in his careless way. "All I wish of you is to agree to do certain things provided that I bring you and Bub together."

"Oh, you are making a bargain with me!" The girl's lip curled in scorn.

"Well, yes, it is something of that sort."

"And supposing that I don't agree?"

"Ah! but you will agree!"

"I will! You certainly have great assurance."

"I know that you will agree, because it is for your interest to do so," he calmly returned.

"And you think that I am ruled solely by my interest?" The girl was rapidly losing her temper.

"Who is there in all this wide world who is not ruled solely by their interest?" he demanded, sarcastically. "From the highest to the lowest man woman or child, the idol, self, rules all the world."

"You will find that there is one in this world who is not ruled by it!" the girl cried, spiritedly.

"You mean to imply that you will not do as I wish?"

"You have guessed correctly!" she exclaimed, in lofty scorn.

"But you don't know what I wish."

"I do not care to know!"

"In a week you will think differently, and until that time I bid you adieu."

Grahame bowed himself out. He had a crafty scheme on hand.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A TERRIBLE BLOW.

THE haughty lip of the girl curled in contempt.

"This fellow is an arch scoundrel," she murmured, "but I can defy his malice. Otis Lawrence can never be anything to me; to indulge in such a hope is simply to cast reason aside; but, there is a fascination—a charm in his society which I am not strong enough to resist,

although I know full well that I imperil myself by yielding to it. He will never marry me; the thought is folly, and I tread upon the very brink of a frightful precipice when I encourage his attentions. I will not be so weak and foolish in the future; I will avoid him, although the struggle tears my heart in twain."

A brave resolution, and the girl fully intended to carry it out, but in this world man proposes and fate disposes.

Grahame's face was dark and his brows contracted as he paced slowly down the street.

"She will have it!" he muttered; "I would have spared her the blow, but she is obstinate, and, as I can't bend her, she must break. Proud and willful after the fashion of her sex! Well, within a week I will undertake to humble her to the level of the dust."

But the shrewd Mr. "Harry Gray" worked by wit and not by witchcraft, and wit depended upon dilatory time; and so, for fully a week, nothing worth particular mention occurred.

Bub visited his siren daily; again he was fast in her toils, and as for all her mighty resolutions they vanished into thin air in his presence.

Heart and soul the girl was devoted to the stroke-oar, and at times there arose in her mind a wild determination to win him for her own, despite all the obstacles that existed.

The time for the race was fast approaching. Lured by the wiles of the siren, whose fatal fascinations had taken so strong a hold upon him, Bub neglected his training and lingered in New York notwithstanding the remonstrances of the rest of the crew.

"Oh, it's all right, boys," he replied. "I am in excellent health and am taking the best of care of myself. Don't be alarmed about me; when the day of the race comes I will take my place in the boat as fit and in as good a fettle as any man in the crew. I am detained in town by important matters."

The search after Winny he had given up; Grahame had taken the matter upon himself and after a pretended search had assured Bub that old Milligan had removed the girl to some secret hiding-place, and that for the present it was impossible to trace her; and Bub, with that fatal weakness, about the only blemish in his noble nature, tamely accepted the statement; he was quieted though by Grahame's repeated declaration that if the matter was left in his hands he would most assuredly find the lost one in time.

It was no part of Grahame's plan to bring Bub and Winny together. He had removed Winny from Cambridge that she in New York might act as a lure to entice Bub away from the crew, but for his master-stroke he had reserved the other girl. He had shrewdly calculated that, although Kitty was apparently much more high-tempered and proud than the meek and loving Winny, yet those very qualities could be made use of to forward his designs.

Just a week had elapsed since the day on which the interview between Grahame and the girl of double life had taken place, and Kitty, robing herself for the street in her dressing-room at the hotel, received word that a lady and gentleman wished to see her in the parlor.

Totally unable to guess who her visitors were and rather astonished at the call, for she was little used to visits from strangers, she gave the finishing touches to her toilet, adjusted the diamonds in her ears and then descended to the reception-room.

She entered, carelessly swinging the door to behind her. The lady and gentleman rose to receive her, their faces convulsed with emotion, and, oh horror! Kitty recognized her father and mother!

A wild cry came from the lips of the girl; she staggered back, her face as pale as the face of the dead, and but for the support of a friendly chair, which involuntarily her trembling hand had grasped, she would have fallen prostrate to the floor.

"Father—mother!" she gasped.

"You see, mother, I told thee naught but the truth!" the old man exclaimed, his voice husky and trembling with emotion.

A sob was the only reply of the old dame, and bursting into a flood of tears she sunk down into a chair.

"Yes, this is the lass that we toiled for," the old man continued, "the daughter that we thought we were a-bringing up to be a good, pious girl, the support and comfort of our old age. And now, how do we find her? a-flaunting it like a princess with diamonds in her ears and sin in her heart!"

"Oh, no, father—mother, believe me, I am a good, honest girl!" Kitty cried, wildly, flinging herself down at the feet of the old man.

"Don't 'ee call me fayther! I will have naught to do with ye!" he replied, sternly.

"Oh, Kitty, to go and break our hearts this 'ere way," the old woman sobbed.

"Wasn't it enough that you should take the wretched wages of sin yourself without forcing us to have a part in 'em?" old Gogage exclaimed, his voice trembling with passion.

"But, father, I haven't done anything wrong; I only honorably use the gifts that Heaven has given me!"

"And where do you use 'em?" the father cried; "in the devil's house, the theater! I saw you

there two nights ago with my own eyes. I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it, tricked out in silk and laces and with diamonds all over you! Oh, girl, girl, I would rather have seen you in your grave-clothes, dressed for your coffin!"

A fresh outburst of sobs from the old lady interrupted the father's speech.

"But, father," pleaded the agitated girl, "I am just as good a girl now as when I first left the shelter of your roof."

"And you lied to us, too!" the old man added, fiercely. "We accepted your earnings—the money that we thought you had gained by honest toil, and that money kept a roof over our heads when, if it hadn't a-been for it, we should have been houseless, homeless wanderers in the streets, maybe; but, we're here now to pay it all back. I went home to the Woodbine after I see'd you tricked out in your stage finery and I told your mother all about it and she wouldn't believe me; she thought that there must be some awful mistake about it, and so I brought her on here to this great overgrown city, for I wanted her to see with her own eyes; and now she has seen; she's seen your diamonds—your false yaller hair and all your fine fixings, and—"

"Oh, Kitty, you've broken my heart!" the old woman sobbed.

"Father—mother, forgive me!" the girl implored, with streaming eyes. "I did it all for the best. I could not bear to see you toil so; I desired to help you along in the battle of life."

"And to help you have sacrificed your immortal soul!" the old man replied, solemnly.

"Oh, Kitty, Kitty, think of the judgement in the world to come!" Mrs. Googage exclaimed.

"My fault is not such a terrible one; I am still a good, honest girl, and I defy the world to prove that I am otherwise!"

"Oh, lass; we don't go by the opinions of the vain, wicked world," Googage answered. "In our own hearts we judge you, and our judgment condemns you. Never more will we call you child!"

"Oh, father, for Heaven's sake have mercy!" the unhappy girl plead.

"Ask mercy of the Heaven that you have outraged with your sinful ways—with your diamonds and your fine clothes!" answered the old man, sternly; "but as for us, we are done with you forever. Wasn't it enough that you should eat the bread of sin and shame in secret, without making us share it with you? And we took your money, Heaven forgive us for doing it, but we thought that you had wrought for it and gained the silver by honest toil; we had no idea that it was the devil's ware!"

"Oh, the bread it bought ought to have choked us!" moaned the old woman.

"But we've come to give it all back," and old Googage produced his old-fashioned, capacious pocket-book as he spoke; then he undid the strap which bound it and took out some legal-looking documents. "Here's a deed of the Woodbine Inn; and here's a bill of sale of everything that's in the house. We don't want anything, neither the old woman nor I, except the clothes we stand in. We don't know how much money you've given us; we never kept no account of it, 'cos we never expected for to have to give a reckoning of it; but we'll just give up everything and go out into the world again as poor as we began."

"Oh, father, for God's sake, don't talk this way; you will break my heart!" the unhappy girl cried, in her keen agony.

"And what regard did you have for us or for our hearts?" the enraged father demanded, sternly. "You made us eat the wages of sin, and we lived and thrived on it. Heaven's curse fall on your head, you vile girl!"

"No, no, Ben, don't curse her!" cried the aged mother, interposing. "Come away!"

"Oh, don't leave me—take me with you!" and Kitty clung to the old man's knees.

"Take you with us now that we know what you are! Why, we would rather cherish a serpent in our bosoms, vile girl that you are." And the father rudely cast her off.

With a pitiful cry the unhappy girl fell fainting to the floor. The mother would have gone to her assistance, but the old man forced her away and hurried her from the house.

When Kitty recovered her senses, she discovered Harrison Grahame bending over her.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A DIABOLICAL SCHEME.

EAGERLY she looked around for her parents, but they had departed. For a moment she thought that the terrible scene through which she had just passed was the baseless fabric of a dream, but the legal papers lying by her side upon the carpet, whither the old man had cast them, was ample proof that all that had transpired was sober, stern reality.

"By Jove! Miss Paulina, you gave me a terrible fright!" Grahame exclaimed, perceiving that the girl had recovered her senses. "I was afraid that you were dead."

"A—sudden faintness, that is all," she replied, rising to her feet as she spoke, assisted by the sympathetic Mr. Grahame, and then almost staggering into a chair, so weak was she after the terrible ordeal through which she had passed.

"Here are some papers—legal documents, apparently, which you have dropped," Grahame remarked, picking up the folded papers and presenting them to her.

A shudder passed over the girl, despite her endeavors to appear calm, as her fingers closed upon the articles. These paper bullets had wounded her terribly, and the shock had been so severe that the blow had dazed her.

Of course she had not the slightest suspicion that the gentleman who had come to her assistance knew aught of the dreadful interview which had preceded and had occasioned her fainting spell.

Astonished indeed would she have been if she had known that it was solely to Mr. Harrison Grahame she was indebted for her parents' visit!

But it was the truth.

In dark and devious ways this arch plotter worked. By sheer accident he had discovered that the old tramp, Milligan, was a relative of the innkeeper, Ben Googage, and, upon sounding the aged vagrant upon the subject, he had learned that Milligan bore his prosperous relative no very great amount of love. A cunning scheme at once suggested itself; so he remarked, carelessly, to the old rascal that he knew a secret concerning the Googage family which would trouble the old man very much if the facts came to his knowledge. Milligan was all ears, and earnestly he besought Grahame to reveal to him the particulars, as he coarsely said:

"I don't owe him no love; he never did nothink for me wot he ought to. Wot's a bit of bread an' meat an' a sup of beer when a man wants the ready chink? Blow me tight! if I wouldn't like to give him one for his nob!"

This wretch really was ignorant of the meaning of the word gratitude. He envied and hated his relative because by honest toil he had prospered.

Finding that in the tramp he had a willing and ready tool to serve his purpose, Grahame revealed to him the secret concerning the innkeeper's daughter, and then suggested a plan by means of which he, Milligan, could deeply wound the old man. The tramp gladly assented to the scheme; but, with all his low cunning, he never for a moment suspected that Grahame took any particular interest in the affair. He thought that the astute Mr. Grahame planned the trick simply to oblige him.

Milligan wrote to old Googage that he had something important to tell him in regard to his daughter; that she had grossly deceived him, and that if he valued her at all to come at once to New York or it would be too late.

Of course, as was but natural under the circumstances, old Googage took alarm and hurried to great Gotham where Milligan met him as per agreement. He told the excited father of the life which his daughter was leading. Googage was furious, and for a time refused to believe that the story could be true, but Milligan swore that with his own eyes he had witnessed her performance on the stage. The millinery store was visited and Miss Kitty Googage inquired for, and as had been previously arranged, the answer was given that Miss Googage had gone out of the city to attend to an important customer.

The father was staggered, and terrible indeed was the agony he suffered until the night came and he visited the Music Hall where Mademoiselle Paulina held forth to admiring audiences.

Although in a measure prepared for the shock yet the blow fell with terrible force when he discovered in the person of the sweet-voiced, yellow-haired siren, Mademoiselle Paulina, his own idolized daughter.

He said very little acted more like a man whose senses were benumbed with liquor than anything else, and when the singer vanished from the stage he grabbed his hat and left the hall, closely followed by Milligan, who was considerably astonished by his relative's silence.

In the street, just as soon as they had got beyond the glare of the bright lights that illuminated the front of the Music Hall, Googage seized Milligan by the shoulders with a gripe that was like iron.

"Hark ye!" he cried, "do ye know where the girl lives?"

Milligan did; Grahame had informed him in shrewd anticipation of just such a question, and he at once imparted the information to the questioner.

"That's all I want to know!" Googage exclaimed, his voice husky, hoarse and unnatural. "This is no good turn that you have done me, but an evil one, and I think from an evil motive. From this night, then, keep out of my sight; don't 'ee ever come near ag'in, or I'll break every bone in your skin!" And then the angry man strode away.

Little did the villainous old tramp care for threats; he had done the mischief that he had planned—had wounded the honest heart of the man who had often befriended him, more cruelly than if he had planted a dagger in it, and now he gloated over the ruin he had wrought, all unconscious, blind fool that he was, that he had been only an unconscious instrument to aid in the carrying out of the deep-laid schemes of that prince of tricksters, Harrison Grahame.

Straight home the old innkeeper went, told his wife of the terrible discovery which he had made, and the aged couple consulted together, with that grim Puritanism so strong a characteristic of the religious sect to which they belonged, determined at once to sever every bond which existed between them and their only child.

The faith they professed taught them that it was only right to do so, and that their chance of salvation was periled if they acted otherwise.

How strange the religion that teaches us that we can only gain heaven by sacrificing all earthly joys and stifling all human feelings!

The old couple fully carried out their determination, as the reader already knows.

And now that we have fully explained how the unexpected discovery was brought about, we will return to the interview between the cunning schemer and the beautiful girl whom he intended to use as his tool.

In a mechanical sort of way she had taken the papers, her thoughts evidently far away.

"You are distressed, my dear Miss Kitty," Grahame observed, abruptly; "pardon me if I address you by your own true appellation rather than by your fanciful stage name."

"Yes, I—I am not well," the girl replied, slowly, hardly conscious in truth of what she said, so great was the agitation under which she labored.

"It was a terrible discovery for your parents to make, and yet I do not see how they could find it in

their hearts to treat you so savagely," he continued.

A look of anguish swept rapidly over the girl's face, for she felt hurt and humiliated that the truth should be known to any one.

"I happened to be passing in the entry and just by chance overheard part of the interview," he explained; "and I trust that you will pardon me if I played the listener, for it was with a good purpose, I assure you, and solely to serve you."

"To serve me?" the girl exclaimed, in wonder.

"Yes; I am aware that I am not rated very highly in your opinion, and I will own frankly that in serving you in this matter I am also serving myself. You see, I am going to be honest with you."

"How can you serve me?"

"I can arrange it so that your parents will forgive you and again gladly take you to their hearts."

The eyes of the girl sparkled and an eager look appeared upon her face.

"Oh, don't look incredulous; I can do all I say."

She shook her head sadly; she doubted.

"Listen patiently while I explain my plan, but first answer me a question or two. How do your parents regard my cousin, Otis Lawrence?"

"They think highly of him."

"Suppose Otis was to marry you—would not your father and mother extend to his wife the pardon that they deny to their own child?"

"Yes, I think they would."

"That marriage would redeem you?"

"Yes; but it is impossible—impossible!"

"No, it is not—I can arrange it!" he cried, quickly.

"Bub is madly in love with you, and each new day his passion increases. All that you need to do is to encourage him. Follow my instructions and I will guarantee that within a month he is yours forever."

"But why do you interest yourself in this matter?" Kitty asked, suspiciously.

"Because I am in love with your rival, Winifred, and if you don't win him, she will," Grahame answered, readily.

The girl's suspicions at once vanished, for she saw that her visitor had indeed good reasons for his interference.

"But I fear that the task is a hopeless one," she declared, in a manner that plainly betrayed her incredulity.

"And I am sure that it is not, if you will only follow my instructions," he replied, quickly. "You must take a house by yourself so that you can receive and entertain him at all times; you must keep him continually by you, for the influence that you exercise over him is of the nature of a fascination, and absence breaks the spell."

"Do with me as you like!" cried the girl, suddenly and passionately. "No matter how great the cost—no matter how terrible the risk—how awful the toil, I will submit to anything so long as I win Otis Lawrence!"

And so the compact was made.

CHAPTER XXX.

PEYTON FINDS A CLEW.

GRAHAME was not a man who suffered the grass to grow underneath his feet, and so the instant he enlisted the girl upon his side he pushed matters ahead as fast as possible.

A cosey furnished house upon the west side of the city, was taken; a matronly housekeeper installed to play propriety, and Mademoiselle Paulina moved her quarters to it.

It was Liberty Hall in the truest sense of the word; an apartment, carefully furnished, and adorned with all those little knick-nacks so dear to a woman's heart, was placed at the stroke-oar's disposal, and, as Grahame had shrewdly anticipated, Bub was constantly in the presence of the siren who had bewitched him.

And, on her part, the girl left nothing undone to complete her hold on the young man. She was playing for a great stake and she had determined to leave no means untried to win, and as she perceived how completely Bub seemed under the influence of her fascinations the wild hope which she had cherished of winning him for her husband did not appear to be altogether a delusion.

Men in love had done far more foolish things, and Bub was but mortal after all. In fine, now that she had fairly entered upon the struggle, the goal did not seem so far off, after all.

Grahame, too, seemed likely to succeed in his dark and deep designs, for Lawrence, conscious that he was not acting rightly in neglecting his training, and absenting himself from the crew right on the eve of the race, sought to drown the voice of conscience by indulging quite freely in drink.

The veteran McShouter, too, had been introduced to the stroke-oar, and was a very frequent visitor to the west-side mansion; and so, on two or three occasions when Bub had been drinking freely, and, as a natural consequence, with senses befogged, the veteran had proposed a social game between himself, Grahame and Lawrence, and the result of these social games was that at the end of about two weeks, the bold McShouter held Bub's I. O. U's for the very tidy sum of five thousand dollars.

Grahame had affected to remonstrate with Bub for playing so carelessly; he too was apparently a loser of a few hundreds, but the stroke-oar had laughed at the warning.

"Oh, bother!" he cried; "what are a few hundred dollars to me? I don't doubt that the old rascal has cheated both of us, but he has done it scientifically, and as long as we can't detect it, and are fools enough to play with him, we have no right to complain."

The stroke-oar had little idea of the important part that these little bits of paper, whereon some cabalistic figures were inscribed followed by his signature, would play in deciding the fortunes of the great boat-race. Innocent as a child he had no idea of the dark and wily schemes of his cousin, directed against himself. He loyally trusted Harrison Grahame.

The Harvard crew had not borne the prolonged absence of their best man with patience. Letter after letter had they written imploring Bub to return and not hazard the result of the race by taking his place in the boat in an unfit condition to row.

"I am detained," he replied; "soon I will come." But he came not, and at last, growing restive under the delay, the crew dispatched young Peyton to endeavor to persuade the truant to return.

They knew that the young Virginian possessed great influence over the misguided stroke-oar, and they hoped that Bub would listen to and heed his remonstrance, if delivered in person.

Peyton sought Bub at his usual headquarters, the Fifth Avenue hotel, but found him not, although he still occupied a room there.

One of the hotel clerks perceiving how anxious the Virginian seemed about the matter, took upon himself the task of volunteering a little of information in regard to Lawrence. The clerk was well acquainted with Peyton, having struck up a friendship for him during his previous visits to the city, for Peyton, like the stroke-oar, always stopped at the Fifth Avenue.

"We don't see much of Mr. Lawrence," he remarked, "though he does drop in once in awhile and generally at night, and Mr. Grahame—you know Harrison Grahame?" the Virginian nodded—"well, he usually accompanies him."

"A bad sign," Peyton muttered, "for that fellow is no friend of Bub."

"Well, they're mighty thick, and from what I've seen lately, I should judge that Lawrence is drinking pretty freely."

The Virginian's face darkened. This was a bad sign indeed.

"Are you sure about this?" he asked. "Lawrence seldom used to drink anything."

"He's drinking now and drinking freely, too, and none of your common stuff, either; it's brandy every time. I know, because I've drank with them two or three times."

Peyton thanked the clerk for the information although the tidings annoyed him dreadfully, wrote a brief note to Bub telling him that he, Peyton, had arrived in town and desired to see him, left it in charge of the official and then sauntered to the porch of the hotel.

Bub, constantly in the company of Harrison Grahame, and drinking freely; this was bad news indeed, and instinctively the Virginian felt that his friend was in danger.

What did it mean? What evil demon had taken possession of the once honest and upright stroke-oar?

Wrapped in meditation Peyton took little heed of the passing crowd, and never noticed that a plainly dressed, rather undersized man, had detached himself from the mass and was approaching him with the evident intention of accosting him.

Although the man was habited well enough yet there was that indescribable air about him which to the practiced eye of a police official, would at once have suggested a vagrant and a thief.

Not to make a mystery about the matter we will reveal at once that the new-comer was the long-absent parent of Winifred—old Milligan.

"Well, blarst my blooming hey, if it ain't!" he exclaimed, upon coming face to face with Peyton. "How are you, young governor? Well and hearty I 'opes, for you look it every time! You remember me, don't yer?"

Peyton nodded, for the remembrance of the old and unsavory tramp was still fresh in his mind.

"Well, now, dash my buttons! if I heexpected to see you here!" the man continued; "and where's Mr. Lawrence, if I may make so bold as to ax?"

"I don't know; I am in search of him now."

"And you don't know? Well, now, that is wot I call a bleeding shame!" cried Milligan, emphatically.

"When I see'd you, young governor, I made bold to speak to you 'cos I wanted to know where Mr. Lawrence was. He was kinder sweet arter my gal, you know—my gal, Winny; but, since we've come to the city we ain't seen hide ner 'air of him, worse luck! for, mind you, young governor, I ain't got any objection to love-making. Why! I rayther likes it! I was young once myself, and my gal—why, she jest loves the very ground that gentl'man walks on, only in course she's too modest and delicate for to let on that she cared for him; and you dunno where he is, eh?"

"No, I do not."

"He's in New York somewhere, isn't he?" demanded the tramp, eagerly.

"Yes, I believe that he is."

"Say, young governor, you're a friend to my gal, ain't ye? You ain't got nothink ag'in' her? You wouldn't go for to do anythink to hurt her, would ye?"

"Certainly not."

"And I say, if there was anybody a-tryin' to keep Mister Lawrence away from my gal you'd let on to me, wouldn't you, if you knew it?"

Peyton surveyed the old man in astonishment. "Why, what do you mean? I don't understand. Have you reasons to suppose that anybody is trying to keep Mr. Lawrence away?"

"Well, I don't know," and the aged tramp shook his head, doubtfully. "I've seen a heap of deviltry since I've had my peepers open, an' I'm kinder s'picious by natur'. There's a certain party wot has promised to do certain things and he ain't a-done 'em, and blarst me if I kin get hold of 'im."

Like a flash came a thought into the mind of the Virginian, a wild and whirling thought.

"You mean Harrison Grahame," he said, quietly; "and you are quite right—he is not to be trusted."

Milligan stared for a moment, and then, as if convinced that Peyton might aid him, blurted out:

"Yes, that's the man, and I believe he ain't doing the square thing by me. He sed that he'd fix it so that Mister Lawrence would marry my gal, and he got me to bring her on here, jest so that Mister Lawrence would come on arter her, and he was to fetch him, but, blest if he has! He's playing roots on me, I know that he is; and he's making a tool out of me, too. He got me to fetch old Ben Googage on here for to see his darter out at the music hall, and I did, never thinking no mischief, but, hang me if I ain't been reflectin' 'bout it, and I'll bet that it was all for some little game of his own wot he did it."

Peyton gave a sudden start; the speech of the old man opened his eyes.

"What! is Kitty Googage here, in New York?"

"Well, you had better believe that she is! She's a singer at the Alhambra, in Fourteenth street, and she calls herself Mademoiselle Paulina, all unbeknown to her dad, and wasn't the old man jest crazy when he found it out?"

Kitty in New York—the siren whose spells had ever proved too powerful for Bub to resist! The secret of his delay, then, was explained.

And against such a fatal fascination what charm could avail? Only one!

Winifred, the girl Bub truly loved; her appearance would break the spell. Hastily he cried:

"Old fellow, I can bring Lawrence to see your daughter!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

HOT ON THE SCENT.

"You kin!" Milligan exclaimed, in delight; "well, now, blarst my bleeding eyes if you hain't a trump! Why, you're the very man I've been a-looking arter! Jest you fix the matter and I'll stand somethin' handsome. It's my gal's happiness wot I'm a-lookin' arter, you know! 'Ang me if I want banythink else. I'm able to fight my own way in the world, I am! Oh, I'm a rough-and-tumble customer! I ain't a-go'in' to drive any 'ard bargain with the gent. Wot do I want o' money? Only jest enough fur to live on, and sich a rich nob as he is kin spare a trifle and never feel it. I tell you, young governor, I'm one on nature's noblemen, I am! I'm a tough one to look at, but I'm a good one to tie to! Ax anybody wot knows me and they'll all tell you the same!"

"If I understand the matter rightly, Grahame promised to arrange the affair so that your daughter and Lawrence should be brought together."

"That's wot he did, young governor!" exclaimed the old tramp, eagerly. "Not a bit of a lie about it; I'd take my 'davy to it in any court in the country! but he's played me sharp, he has. He sed that if I took the gal away from Cambridge, your friend would foller arter. Oh! he planned the hull thing, but he's gone back on me, blarst 'im! I know he has, and I'll be even with him. No cove ever played roots on me and made anythink by it, and that's the kind of man I am!"

"He has thrown your daughter overboard for the other girl?"

"That's wot I've been a-thinking, and I want a chance to square the think, I do! Blow me tight! if I wouldn't put a knife right into him! That's the sort of hairpin I'm made of!" And as he spoke the old rascal puffed out his cheeks and endeavored to look ferocious.

"Leave the matter to me and I'll engage to beat Mr. Harrison Grahame in this little game, clever as he is!" Peyton exclaimed, firmly.

"You're a trump, young governor, and no mistake!" Milligan cried, admiringly.

"I will take a hand in the affair, not only because I am a friend to your daughter, but because I am a true friend to Otis Lawrence and I know that Harrison Grahame means to bring him into trouble. Besides, I owe Grahame a grudge and I am not sorry to get a chance to pay it off. Do you know where I can find this Kitty Googage?"

"Blest if I do!" the tramp replied. "Mademoiselle Paulina is wot she calls herself here, you know. Mebbe you kin find out at the Music Hall, the Alhambra, in Fourteenth street, you know."

"A good idea! I'll go there at once; and, by the way, what is your address?"

The old man gave it, but as Peyton jotted it down in his memorandum-book, he glared at him in a suspicious manner.

"I say, young governor, you're going to ax square with me, arn't you? You won't go back on a cove, would you?" he cried, whinnying, and yet with a certain dogged, threatening air.

"Oh, no, you may rely upon me," Peyton replied. "I will ax honestly with you for Winny's sake, if not for yours."

"And you'll let me know wot you find out, governor, as soon as you kin?"

"Yes, to-morrow, perhaps."

"Don't you lose no time, 'cos this Mister Harry Gray is a rough and tough customer! Oh! I know 'im of old. If it's got to come to a fight between yer, get in the first blow and let it be a stinger, or you'll come to grief; just you mind, now, wot I'm telling yer, for I know 'im of old, and he's a rattler—as deep as a well and as sly as a fox!"

"I'll be on my guard; never fear," Peyton replied. "If I learn anything of importance, I will communicate with you to-morrow, or, at any rate, as soon as I can. Good-night," and then Peyton nodded adieu.

"Give it to 'im strong, young governor—and quick!" Milligan cautioned, as the Virginian moved away.

Peyton went at once to the Music Hall in Fourteenth street. It was easily found; such places generally are. The Virginian perused the gaudily-printed bills which ornamented the front of the building, but was unable to discover the name he sought, so he at once applied to the active young man who attended to the box-office.

"Mademoiselle Paulina? Oh, yes; she ain't on this week; mebbe she'll be back next week, or the week after. Jist taking a rest now. Where does she live? Don't know. Go to the stage door; mebbe they'll be able to tell you there. It will cost you something, though."

And then, as the Virginian turned away, the official muttered between his teeth:

"Another flat! Looks as if he'd 'pan' out well, too. My stars! what a heap of money that girl could pick up if she chose to go for these fellows and spoil the Egyptians!"

These box-office gentlemen are always very practical individuals.

At the stage door of the establishment Peyton met with an extremely cold reception.

The back-door-keeper was a surly old fellow and he resented the question in regard to the song-bird's whereabouts as though it had been a personal insult.

"Don't know anything 'bout her!" he growled.

For a moment Peyton felt inclined to be indignant, for the Virginian was tolerably hot-blooded, but sober second thought told him that in such a case as this he could not hope to gain anything by losing his temper.

"See here, my friend," he said, "I am very anxious to find Mademoiselle Paulina. I know her in private life; I have some important business to transact with her, and I am willing to pay liberally for information. I'll give ten dollars to find her," and the Virginian took a ten-dollar bill from his pocket-book and held it up. He judged and judged wisely, that the sign of the bill would prove a great temptation.

The eyes of the old man sparkled. Ten dollars

was quite a large sum to him; he only received six for a whole week's service, day and night.

"Come back, sir, in an hour and I'll find out for you and have a boy ready to show you the house."

"All right, and the money shall be yours."

Peyton departed, and in order to while the time away, went into the Music Hall. The place was crowded and the hour soon slipped away.

Returning to the stage-door he found that the old back-door-tender was as good as his word, for he had a boy in readiness to act as guide.

"This is my son, sir," he said. "He carries the baskets for the theater—the artists' wardrobes, you know, but the lady has moved and it was just by accident that he happened to know the man that moved her trunks. He'll take you to the house, sir, and then you can give him the money."

The boy, who was a shrewd, sharp little lad, conducted Peyton directly to the house of the siren. Grahame, with all his skill and cunning, had not calculated upon this; he did not for an instant imagine that any one would suspect that Mademoiselle Paulina and the stroke-oar would have any common interest.

From the front steps one could look into the parlor, as the window-curtains had not been drawn down.

"There she is," said the boy, whose keen eyes had instantly caught sight of the siren within.

Peyton looked, and at once recognized Kitty Googage, despite the change in her appearance produced by the yellow hair she wore. Another form, too, met his eyes, the manly, well-proportioned figure of the stroke-oar, and a thrill of pain shot through his heart, for he fully comprehended that his friend was fast in the siren's toils.

Peyton gave the boy the promised money, dismissed him, and then rung the door-bell.

A colored man answered the summons.

"You need not announce me," the Virginian said, in his coolest and easiest way. "I wish to give them a surprise."

The guardian of the door, although he had been warned by Grahame, in whose pay he was, to be careful whom he admitted, was completely deceived, and believing the new-comer to be some intimate friend at once stepped aside and allowed Peyton to pass.

The Virginian advanced at once into the parlor, and immediately a most striking tableau was formed. Bub had been lazily reclining in a large easy-chair, languidly puffing a cigar; this was Liberty Hall, be it remembered, and the yellow-haired music-queen was pacing restlessly up and down the apartment, something after the fashion of a caged tiger, for the stroke-oar, by a chance observation in regard to the stage and its votaries, had nettled her.

"What would you have me do?" she had exclaimed. "Stay forever in Cambridge and rest content to be simply the innkeeper's daughter, with no better ambition in life than to be the wife of some honest country clown, and with no higher aim than to work my fingers to the bone in daily drudgery?"

The girl was irritated. The careless remark of the man whom she idolized had, upon the instant, opened her eyes to the extent and depth of the awful gulf that existed between herself and the handsome stroke-oar. She had dared all to win him, and now, when the goal seemed fairly in sight, a careless word, heedlessly spoken, convinced her that slight indeed was the hold she possessed upon the man whose love she coveted.

She had fascinated him; he had lingered spell-bound in her presence, neglecting the duties which called him elsewhere; but to bring him to that pitch of madness necessary before he would forget all social ties and make her his wife, ah! that event seemed far in the dim future.

The entrance of the Virginian then, at this moment, produced a startling picture.

Bub jumped from his chair and grasped him by the hand, while the girl glared at him with angry eyes. Had he come to tear her prize from her?

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE EVIL GENIUS.

"HALLO, old fellow! where did you spring from?" Lawrence exclaimed.

"From New London, where you ought to be!" Peyton replied, sternly.

"Come, come, old fellow; don't scold me!" the stroke-oar exclaimed, confused by the unexpected answer. "I am taking good care of myself, and when the day of the race comes I will take my place in the boat as fit as any man in the crew."

"The crew would feel more sure in regard to that if they had you with them!" Peyton returned, warmly. "Otis, you don't know how you are injuring yourself—how you are injuring the crew, by remaining away from them. Do you know how the betting stands now? It was six to four on Harvard, and now it is five to four on Yale."

"Take all the bets you can get, for we are sure to win!" Bub cried.

"Yes, sure to win if you are in your place and fit to row when we pull in front of the judge's boat to receive the starting word; but will you be there—will you be in trim to row if you are there?"

"And who says that I will not be there?" exclaimed the stroke-oar, indignantly.

"No one man, but all the world when it reverses the odds from six to four on Harvard to five to four on Yale. Isn't that plain proof that there is something wrong, or that the world at large believes that there is something wrong? Is there anything amiss about any man in the crew, yourself excepted?"

"Oh, this is all nonsense," Bub replied, flushing to the temples. "It is only a trick on the part of the sharpers who are scheming to make money by betting on our race. The greater the changes in the odds the better chance for them to turn an honest penny."

"Otis, the crew have sent me to you," said the Virginian, bluntly, perceiving that a desperate stroke was necessary, "they want a plain answer to a plain question."

"Yes?" and Otis released the hand of his friend, and walked over to the window, took a look out into the street, and then, coming back, faced Peyton again. He expected something unpleasant, and was endeavoring to prepare himself for it. "Well, go on; you shall have a plain answer to a plain question."

"Are you coming back to take your place in the boat or shall the crew put another man in your position?"

For a moment the stroke-oar turned as pale as death, and his strong right hand clutched convulsively the back of the chair upon which he was leaning.

"Put another man in my place?" he exclaimed, his voice hoarse and unnatural.

"Yes."

"Another man in my place?" Lawrence repeated, as though unable to believe the evidence of his own ears.

"Yes, although by so doing we risk the loss of the race; but though defeated we still retain our honor. What is it that the world says of the college boys both here and in England? 'They can't be bought to throw a race!' The man who puts his money upon the college regatta does so with perfect faith that, barring accidents, the best crew will win."

"I don't understand you, Peyton; there is some dark meaning in your words—something hidden," Bub remarked, slowly, his face white and his lips trembling.

"You are the stroke-oar—the strong man of the crew, the man above all men who should leave no means untried to win; what is the world to think then when it is reported that you are neglecting your training—that you are lingering here in New York when you ought to be with the crew in New London? What can the world think when it is reported that your own cousin has laid large sums of money that the Harvard boys will be defeated in the race?"

"You mean Harrison?"

"Yes," Peyton replied, firmly.

"But it is not true! He has bet nearly thirty thousand dollars on our side."

"He told you this?"

"Yes; I see by your face that you don't believe it; but you don't like Harrison, and I am afraid that you allow the dislike to bias your mind against him."

"I only repeat to you what is current in every sporting circle in the town. As far as my like or dislike of the man goes I would not allow my personal feelings to sway me a single hair's breadth. You absent yourself from the crew; you hazard the result of the race; your relative is betting largely that your crew will lose; what can the world think but one thing?"

"Don't say what that one thing is!" Bub cried, excitedly. "I can't bear it even from you, the man that I love like a brother. I am tied hand and foot in this matter. I cannot go to New London yet awhile; I have given my word to remain in New York for a certain time."

"Skillfully planned!" Peyton cried, indignantly. "You have been hampered by a promise, so that you will be forced to remain here and so hazard the loss of the race!"

The stroke-oar cast a quick, suspicious glance at the girl, and in an instant the Virginian understood as well as though the information had been conveyed in words that the yellow-haired siren was the person to whom the promise had been given.

"No, you are wrong; upon my life, Peyton, you are wrong! The promise which I have given has nothing whatever to do with the race, nor has the party to whom I have given it any interest whatsoever in the coming contest, except a natural desire to see the crimson handkerchiefs of Harvard lead past the judge's boat at the finish of the race."

The girl cast down her eyes, able mistress of herself as she was and capable of controlling her features so that they would conceal and not betray the secrets of her heart, yet the honest faith so bluntly expressed by Lawrence in her integrity made her feel sore at heart, for she was betraying the stroke-oar into the hands of his enemies. This second Samson had fallen into the hands of a modern Delilah.

In this life one false step almost invariably leads to another unless a terrible effort is made to retrieve the error.

Kitty had yielded her consent to Grahame's wily plan; she had accepted his aid in her scheme to entrap the man for whose love she hungered, as the gaunt miser does after the yellow gold. Then, after she had fairly entered upon the scheme, the cunning trickster had represented to her that he had discovered that all of Bub's fortune had been swallowed up in unwise speculations, with the exception of a small residue, every penny of which he had staked upon the college race.

"If the Harvard crew are beaten," this dark schemer had said, "Bub will be a beggar. Now then which condition favors you? Lawrence with money may hesitate to wed you; but Lawrence, poor, utterly penniless, worse than that, owing debts of honor which he has no means of paying, for in his overweening confidence he has bet more money than he is possessed of, will he not in his despair, think more favorably of the woman who is willing to cling to him in evil fortune as well as when he is basking in the smiles of prosperity? You can advance him a thousand or two dollars to pay his debts of honor; will he hesitate then to repay the service? Oh, no; you know that Bub is as generous as the day; you will appear to him in the light of a guardian angel and he will not hesitate a moment. If the Harvard crew lose the race Lawrence is yours!"

A true daughter of our common mother Eve, Kitty listened to the voice of the tempter. She did more than listen; she acted upon his advice. In one of Bub's unguarded moments she won from him a promise to remain in New York with her until a day or two before the race. Heart and soul she had entered into the service of the schemer, and little did she dream, wild with passion, almost frenzied with "love's delirious thrill," that she was but as clay in the hands of the potter, and therefore when Lawrence expressed himself so bluntly in regard to the propriety of her course, it was but natural that she should feel some stings of conscience, for the girl, her wild, mad love set aside, was really and truly honest, and she would rather have parted with a limb than done aught to work harm to even a single hair of Lawrence's head.

Peyton cast a quick and earnest glance at her as she sat with eyes bowed to the ground, and he could hardly bring himself to believe that she could be instrumental in bringing the man she loved to disgrace, although from what he had heard he was inclined to believe that she was Grahame's accomplice.

He determined to make one last effort.

Bub looked at Kitty, but the girl made no sign.

"It is impossible," the stroke-oar said, shortly.

"Well, I have performed my mission in part, for the crew instructed me to give you four-and-twenty hours to think the matter over. To-morrow night, then, at this same hour, I will come for your final answer, and until then, adieu."

Lawrence accompanied Peyton to the door, shook hands with him warmly, and with a whispered, "Don't blame me, old fellow; I can't help it!" dismissed him.

Peyton retreated, baffled but not beaten, for he still had one weapon left, Winny!

Would Bub withstand her entreaties?

CHAPTER XXXIII.

PEYTON'S MASTER-STROKE.

AFTER leaving the house of the siren, Peyton walked slowly down-town toward his hotel, meditating deeply as he went.

"Six days only to the day of the race," he mused; "whatever is done must be done quickly. I feel sure that Bub is the victim of a terrible plot, and I think that Harrison Grahame is at the bottom of it. Heaven knows that I don't want to wrong the man, even in thought, but I really believe him to be capable of almost anything if the end he has in view is of sufficient importance to justify it. There must be some powerful influence at work or else the state of the betting would never have changed so suddenly and so violently. But Lawrence is blind; he will not see unless the evidence I present is so strong that, perforce, he must acknowledge its truth. And now, to obtain certain proofs that Grahame is betting against the Harvard crew. Even Bub, with all his blindness and his perfect faith in his cousin, will be apt to think that something is wrong if he has undoubted proof that Grahame is betting that his crew will lose."

Just as he arrived at this conclusion Peyton turned into Broadway, and, by one of those strange coincidences that so often happen in this world, he came face to face with the very man above all men whom he desired to see just at this particular moment.

A shabby-genteel gentleman, young, a man of birth and breeding, and yet, with that unmistakable air which, to the practiced eye, denoted the slave of dissipation.

Cooperton he was called, a graduate of Harvard College, a man of good family and fine gifts, and yet he had recklessly blasted all the prospects of a glorious life by his love for liquor, and now, instead of holding a good position in the world, as was his due, he picked up a bare subsistence as the keeper of a betting-room.

If there was any man in New York who could procure the information that the Virginian sought, "Bill" Cooperton was the man.

After the usual greetings—for Cooperton, despite his one besetting vice, still retained the good opinion of his acquaintances, that is those of the right sort who had sense enough to see that the fallen man had rich and rare manly qualities despite his lowly station and his evil habits—Peyton came at once to the point, and explained fully and frankly what he desired.

At first Cooperton shook his head. "Harry Gray" was no stranger to him, and as well as any man living he knew how difficult it would be to discover anything about him if it was to Grahame's interest to cover up his tracks.

"He's no flat, Peyton," he said; "in fact, from what I know of him I think that he's a mean, miserable rascal without the least bit of a heart; I owe him a grudge, too, for, with one of his cunning tricks, he put me in the hole once for a couple of thousand; he took advantage of me when I wasn't myself; and now, Peyton, if you say the word, to use the slang, I'll put up a job on him."

"Do so, by all means!" exclaimed the Virginian, eagerly. "Anything is fair when contending with such a thoroughbred rascal."

"From what you have told me, I haven't the slightest doubt that he has bet heavily against Harvard, and that he will do his best to keep Lawrence here in New York until the last minute and so endanger the loss of the race. Now, what you want is absolute proof that he has bet that Harvard would lose the race?"

"Yes, that is it exactly—proof about which there can be no dispute."

"You shall have it if you have sufficient confidence in your crew to bet a thousand dollars that they will win in the coming race."

"Certainly; I'll do that gladly."

"Well, then, I think I can trap this cunning gentleman, smart as he thinks himself. I know a certain place where I am likely to find him, between now and midnight. I'll just lay in wait for him and tempt him by announcing that I've a thousand dollars that has been left with me to bet, at even money, against Yale. The chances are that he'll snap at the offer, for of course he won't suspect any underhand game from me. As the keeper of a betting-shop it is my business to arrange such things. I'll book the bet, and of course he'll have to sign his name."

"But, do you think that he'll do that?" asked Peyton, quickly.

"Yes, on the spur of the moment, for he will have no suspicion that there is any use to be made of it. Then with his name to the bet, and my evidence in regard to it—for weak fool as I am, my word has never been doubted—I am sure that Bub will be convinced that his cousin is playing him false."

"Do you require the money now?"

"Oh, no; your word is enough, but it had better be done through a second party, for the name must be signed. I had forgotten that. Get the landlord to represent you. You are stopping at the Fifth Avenue as usual?"

The Virginian nodded assent.

"Suppose we fix the matter up, then, right away, and then I'll be prepared for my gentleman."

This agreed with Peyton's ideas exactly, so the two proceeded to the hotel, arranged the affair with the landlord, and then the betting-man proceeded on his mission, and so skillfully and quickly did he work that at exactly ten minutes past twelve that night he placed in Peyton's hand the evidence which clearly proved beyond even the shadow of a doubt that Harrison Grahame had wagered a thousand dollars

that the Harvard crew would be beaten in the coming race.

This was work enough for one day, and so Peyton retired to rest quite satisfied. The conviction had been gradually growing upon him that, in the end, he would succeed in baffling the crafty schemer who was striving by such unfair means to compass the defeat of the Harvard crew.

The Virginian was up early in the morning, made a hearty breakfast, and then, adjourning to the portico of the hotel to enjoy a cigar, encountered the old vagabond, Milligan.

This worthy had not been able to restrain his impatience, and so he had come in search of the Virginian to ascertain if there was anything new upon the carpet.

In brief words Peyton told him how matters stood, and the indignation of the old fellow was something wonderful.

"Bet ag'in' the Harvard crew? Why, in course he has! and he told me, as a friend, that if I 'ad any stamps to invest that there was a fortin for me in it. An' so he's gone and thrown my gal overboard and fixed things for this other beauty! Wouldn't I like to spile it for her neither!" and the ruffian doubled up his fist and shook it, menacingly.

"Yes, he used your daughter to lure Lawrence on to New York, and then, after he got him here, took him to the other girl!"

"Oh, blarst 'im!" howled Milligan, in righteous wrath; "wouldn't I like to get a crack at 'im! But I say, young governor, you ain't a-goin' to stand it, are you? Didn't you say as 'ow you was a friend to my gal, and are you a-goin' to see this other heifer take the man she hankers arter away from her in this here scaly manner?"

"When can I see your daughter?" asked Peyton, paying but little attention to the lamentations of the old rascal, as he knew well enough that all Milligan cared for was his own precious self, and that he was only eager to bring his daughter and the stroke-oar together so that he might profit by it.

"Right away, young governor; just as soon as you like, and the sooner the better if so be as how you are a-goin' to do anything fur to help my gal, and you ought to, for she's an old spark of yours, and what do you care for this other one, anyway? and if you kin fix the thing up right, and money is any object to you, why, blow me tight! if I wouldn't stand a goodish pile when I makes my little rake!"

Peyton restrained the strong impulse he had to kick the rascal, and signified that he was ready to accompany him at once; so off the two went.

The Virginian now was to set about his most difficult task. He did not underrate the amount of toil involved in the attempt, but for the sake of the friend whom he loved he resolved, if it laid within the compass of his power, to save him from dishonor.

In due time the two arrived at the door of the modest apartments occupied by old Milligan and his daughter.

"Have you any objection to my having a private interview with Winny?" Peyton asked.

"Wot do you want to do that fur?" Milligan cried, taking the alarm at once. "Why can't I hear wot you're going to say? It's a blooming shame, you know, if I arn't to know wot's going on."

"I don't think that I can do anything with the girl if you are around, and if I can't arrange the affair my own way, I might as well give it up," and the Virginian made a movement to retreat.

"Hol' on, hol' on, young governor!" the tramp cried, in haste; "don't you be in such a precious hurry. I'm willing to listen to reason, I am! There never was sich a reason'ble creatur' as I am; so go ahead if so be as 'ow you must; but I say, young governor, you're goin' to do the fair thing, ain't you? You won't go fur to play any roots onto me?"

"If you doubt me don't trust me!" Peyton replied, sententiously.

"Oh, go ahead; but it's a blooming, bleeding shame if a feller can't ask a question or two when it's his own gal wot's the matter!"

"Show me in and then get out!" Peyton commanded.

Milligan grumbled but obeyed.

Winny had changed for the worse during the brief period of time that elapsed since she left Cambridge and the protecting care of the old doctor, but it was with something of her old spirit that she arose and greeted the Virginian.

Milligan improved the opportunity to put in a few parental words.

"Listen to wot he says, and do wot he tells yer, for he's the gentl'man wot knows wot's wot. Mind yer eye and we'll win by a head, yet!" And then, after this ambiguous giving out, he departed.

It is of little use to repeat in detail the scene that followed. Suffice it to say that at last, won by Peyton's pleading, and truly anxious to save the man she so dearly loved from dishonor, Winny consented to do as the Virginian requested.

Like a skillful player Peyton was about to match one queen against the other.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A WOMAN'S LOVE.

As fate would have it Grahame did not learn of Peyton's visit until the following morning; and then, when Kitty related to him all the particulars of the interview, the dark and cunning trickster was considerably annoyed. He meditated carefully for a few moments in regard to the matter, and then spoke:

"This visit means mischief; Peyton bears me no good will and he will strain himself to the utmost to do me harm. And he told Bub that I was betting against the Harvard crew?"

"Yes; but Otis refused to believe it."

"I don't really see what harm he can do," Grahame observed, after a few moments of anxious thought. "Bub's perfect trust in me is a shield against which Master Peyton's malice will fall in vain. How is Lawrence this morning?"

"Moody and dejected; he is evidently ill at ease. He said this morning that he was a fool to give me such a promise as he did, and that I was no true friend to him if I held him to it."

"And what did you say?"

"What could I say?" the girl exclaimed, with bitter accent. "I know that I am playing him false, and I fear that if he ever learns the truth he will despise me forever."

"Ah, but he will never learn the truth!" replied

the tempter, in his smoothest manner, "unless you are foolish enough to tell it to him."

"But will I gain the end I seek?" she cried, impetuously. "Already I fear that he is beginning to tire of me. I think I can detect it in his manner, and after the race is over, and his crew is beaten, will he not blame me for all his misfortunes?"

"Oh, no; on the contrary, humiliated and discouraged, he will seek in your society to find forgetfulness and rest. He will gladly leave this part of the country, and in some distant spot with your aid build up a new life. Hold fast and you will surely win him; but if you betray the slightest uneasiness now, then most surely Bub will take the alarm, and then, goodbye to all your hopes of ever becoming his wife."

It is easy in this life to persuade us to take the path toward which our inclinations lead us.

The tempter was successful and the girl promised to stand firm.

Grahame then departed, his mind but a little relieved, for, instinctively, he scented danger. He prepared to offer a bold fight, though. To the colored servant who attended the door he gave stringent instructions.

"If any strangers come send for me on the instant, particularly if one of them be the young man who came last night."

Grahame had really no reason to suppose that any one would come, for Peyton had apparently retired, foiled in his quest, for the girl in her agitation had neglected to inform him that the Virginian had announced that he would give Bub four-and-twenty hours to consider the matter. This, the most important fact of all, she had neglected to repeat.

Grahame was simply providing against contingencies—providing most wisely, as after events proved.

All due precautions having been taken the schemer departed.

"Only a few days more of this terrible suspense," he murmured, as he walked slowly down the street; "only a few days more, and then fortune will land me a winner, or else cast me upon the shore, wrecked and ruined forever!"

Leaving this cunning trickster who was playing—and playing so ably—for his great game, to follow his own devices, merely premising that they were of little interest to the reader—we will return to the Virginian.

Peyton having fully prepared his plan of attack waited patiently until the twenty-four hours' grace should have expired, and then, promptly at the moment, he ascended the steps of the modest dwelling within which the song-bird had taken refuge and where she had lured old Harvard's winning oar.

The colored servant answered the bell as usual and recognizing Peyton at once, hesitated to admit him.

"Hol' on, boss!" he ejaculated, interposing his person so as to prevent the young man from entering; "who does yer want to see?"

"Mr. Otis Lawrence," replied Peyton, promptly, drawing himself together as he spoke and preparing to make good his position by main force, and, slightly built as he was, the Virginian was no mean antagonist, for he was extremely powerful and as spry as a cat.

The sound of Peyton's voice reached the ears of the stroke-oar himself, who was pacing restlessly up and down the parlor, and he came at once into the entry.

"Come in, Peyton," he said, his voice strangely altered, and his tone strangely different. Lawrence was no longer the same light-hearted, jovial fellow as in the old time. He was beginning to chafe restlessly, against the spells of the enchantress.

The servant reluctantly made way and Peyton followed Bub into the room, which was already occupied by the girl. But the moment the two men entered the parlor, the colored fellow seized his hat and hurried off to warn Grahame as had been previously arranged.

"Well, old fellow, you've come for my answer, I suppose," Bub said, his manner nervous and his face excited.

"Yes; the four-and-twenty hours are up now, you know."

"Peyton, I am bound to remain here, as I told you; I have given my word. I begin to believe, now, that I acted like a fool in so doing, but I have done it, and the less that is said about the matter the better, I suppose."

Both the voice and manner of the stroke-oar betrayed strong irritation.

"Will not the party to whom you have given the pledge release you under the circumstances?" Peyton asked. "He or she, man or woman, is no friend to you if the release is not freely given." The Virginian felt perfectly sure that it was the girl to whom the promise had been given, and he was determined not to spare her, but to boldly give utterance to the truth.

"It is idle to speak about the matter!" Bub replied, impatiently. "It cannot be. And now I wish to know what the crew intend to do?"

"What would you have them do under the circumstances?" Peyton demanded.

"Wait for me!" Bub cried, imploringly. "For Heaven's sake, wait for me! I am all right; I will take my place in the boat on the day of the race, fit to row for a man's life!"

"And would you do so under like circumstances?" the Virginian exclaimed. "Would you, as captain of the crew, allow any one man of the eight to absent himself until the very eve of the race, and by so doing put in peril the result? Would you sanction it?"

"No, by Heaven, I would not!" thundered Bub. "I would put another man in his place, even though the substitute was the poorest oarsman in the college!"

Lawrence was honest, even though misguided.

"Do not blame us, then, for acting as you would act. Lawrence, you are the victim of a plot; this promise has been extorted from you on purpose to insure the loss of the race to our crew. You think that your cousin, Harrison Grahame, is your friend, and yet only last night he bet a thousand dollars that Yale would win the race!" Peyton replied.

"Impossible!" cried Bub, amazed.

"His own signature shall prove the truth of my accusation."

Peyton stepped to the window and tapped upon it;

then from the outer darkness came two forms, and the Virginian admitted them to the house. The first was Cooperton, the keeper of the betting-house; the second, a woman, closely veiled.

"You know Mr. Cooperton, and know that he is a man of his word," Peyton said. "He will bear witness that last night Harrison Grahame bet a thousand dollars against the Harvard crew."

"I will, and here is his signature to the agreement," Cooperton remarked, stepping forward and placing the document in Bub's hand.

The stroke-oar could hardly believe the evidence of his eyesight.

"By Heaven! it is his signature!" he cried.

"And who denies it?" cried the voice of Grahame himself, and that individual stepped boldly and defiantly into the room. "It is my signature, and did not you yourself, Otis, urge me to hedge—to bet against Harvard, so as to be safe no matter how the race went?"

"It is the truth," Bub answered, staggered and undecided. "I did urge him to hedge and make himself safe, for he told me that he had bet a large amount—too large for him to lose—that Harvard would win the race."

"And I defy him to produce a single particle of evidence proving that he has wagered even a copper coin upon the Harvard crew!" Peyton cried.

"Really, I am not aware that I am at all accountable to this young gentleman for my actions!" Grahame replied, insolently. He saw that the Virginian had entrapped him.

"But you can produce the proofs, though, that you have bet largely on Harvard?" Bub asked, anxiously. "It was strange how he clung to his belief in this man."

"Of course I can!" Grahame cried, at once; "and after the race is over you shall see them, but, as my word is doubted now, I do not intend to be forced to produce them simply to oblige this young gentleman here," and the speaker nodded insolently at Peyton.

"Lawrence, it is not a question now of men's words, but of proofs that can not be disputed," the Virginian observed calmly. "I here present to you the actual evidence that this man has bet against the Harvard crew. Now, then, is his bare word to avail against this undoubted proof? I tell you, Lawrence, you are the victim of one of the vilest conspiracies that ever existed. This man deliberately planned to lure you to New York; then he brought you in contact with this lady," and he indicated Kitty. "And you, miss, you are a tool in this conspirator's hands; it was he that brought your father to see you at the Music Hall. You can probably tell why he did so."

With a half-scream the girl sprang to her feet, a look of utter despair upon her face.

CHAPTER XXXV.

GRAHAME'S LAST BLOW.

"It is a lie—not a word of truth in it!" the trickster exclaimed, amazed at this sudden revelation, which he had not at all expected.

"It is the truth!" retorted the veiled woman, firmly, removing her veil as she spoke and exposing the pale face of Winny. "My father told me that he sent for his cousin, Mr. Googage, at your instigation, and then took him to the Music Hall by your orders. He also told me that it was you who counseled him about taking me away from Doctor Peabody, and that he brought me to New York by your orders; and that Mr. Grahame, furthermore, promised him that he would arrange it so that I could be married to this gentleman."

It was a hard task for the gentle and modest girl to speak out so bluntly, but she was resolved to do all in her power to save the stroke-oar from the plots of his enemies.

"Oh, merciful Heaven! what a ready, miserable tool I have been in the hands of this man!" Kitty cried, wildly, her eyes open at last to the folly of which she had been guilty. "Otis, I give you back your promise, for it was this vile man that persuaded me to extort it from you. You are free to depart at once if you choose to go; I will not hinder you; and you, wretch!" she turned violently upon Grahame as she spoke, "what did I ever do to you that you should treat me in this terrible manner? Guided by your evil counsel I have lost all that I prized in this world!"

"And do you believe this absurd story?" demanded Grahame, determined to brave it out.

"Leave this house or I shall do you a mischief!" cried Kitty, imperiously. "You have turned my brain and made me mad."

Grahame hesitated for a moment; a bitter speech was on his tongue; but his customary prudence halted him.

"Ta, ta, all of you! I'll see you again!" he exclaimed, coolly, and then he left the house.

Seizing upon the opportunity Peyton, with Cooperton and Winny, also withdrew.

"I will see you at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, in half an hour," Lawrence said, as they departed.

Upon her bended knees the unhappy girl craved the stroke-oar's pardon.

"The temptation was great; my fall terrible! Oh, have mercy upon me!" she cried.

"Wait until the race is over; give me time; I will do you justice if I can," Lawrence, replied, soberly. And so they parted.

Bub was as good as his word; he went straight to the Fifth Avenue Hotel, where he found Peyton in waiting for him.

"Now, I am at your service," the stroke-oar said, with a weary air.

"Good! The quicker we depart the better!" exclaimed the Virginian, gleefully.

"Yes; the sooner the better."

"There is a train to-night; we have just about time to make it."

"Let us go then."

"But, Winny—do you not want to say a parting word to her?" Peyton asked.

"It would be better to leave it unsaid," Lawrence replied, with bitter accent. "By my own folly I have raised up a barrier which must forever separate us. I am in honor bound now to marry Kitty."

"And do you love her well enough for that?"

"No!" cried Bub, quickly, and with an air of loathing. "After what has passed the very sight of her is painful to me, but I am bound hand and foot now. I will marry her, and then in some foreign land hide myself and my despair forever."

"You may change your mind," Peyton suggested. "No, not unless some great change takes place in my affairs which I do not anticipate."

Perceiving that he had fully made up his mind, Peyton understood that further words were useless, and so the two friends proceeded at once to the depot, embarked on the train, and an hour or two after midnight they arrived safely at New London.

To describe the joy of the crew as they crowded around and welcomed their captain would be no easy task; full of confidence were they now that the crimson would lead the blue in the coming race.

Bub went at once into active training, and the shrewd betting-men who ran on to New London to watch the crews at their practice-work on the bosom of the smiling Thames, shook their heads shrewdly and predicted that if the Harvard crew was beaten in the race the Yale boys must pull over the course in less time than the same distance had ever been covered before.

The betting began to veer around; no surer sign than this of the way that public sentiment is tending in regard to such events. From five to four on Yale, it went even money that Harvard would win; then the sporting fraternity began to offer odds; no friendly sentiment governs these wily gentlemen; they bet to win, and would lay odds against their own brother if they thought they stood fair to succeed. Finally on the day before the race the odds were two to one on Harvard.

Nothing had been seen or heard of the scheming Mr. Grahame, and as far as appearances went that cunning gentleman had retired from active life.

Bub never spoke of him, for his cousin's treachery was a sore subject.

The night before the race came. The Harvard boys in their quarters were just preparing to retire to rest, when suddenly the premises were invaded by three strangers, hangdog-looking fellows, who asked to see Mr. Otis Lawrence, and when that gentleman stepped forward, they coolly announced that they were constables and had a warrant for his arrest.

At once then there was an uproar in the camp, and but for Bub and Peyton the intruders would have been roughly handled.

"No, no, boys, no violence!" Bub cried. "If these men are acting under authority I will not resist!"

The chief of the intruders instantly produced his warrant, a requisition signed by the Governor of the State of New York for one Otis Lawrence, an absconding debtor.

"A debtor!" cried Bub, in wonder. "I owe no man!"

"I beg your pardon!" exclaimed the bold McShouter, appearing suddenly in the doorway, "but you owe me five thousand dollars, and I've got your IOUs for the amount."

The nature of the trap at once flashed upon all. This was Grahame's work. Of course it was clearly illegal, and upon Bub's arrival in New York the whole proceeding as far as it affected his liberty would be quashed, but the design was to remove him so that he could not row.

"It is a fraud! do not yield to it, Lawrence!" Peyton cried.

And then through the door, followed by eight or ten rough-looking men, came Harrison Grahame.

"This man is our prisoner, and we're going to take him, alive or dead!" he exclaimed.

"Clean 'em out!" yelled one of the Harvard boys, excited almost to madness, and, suiting the action to the word, he gave the foremost constable a clasp in the face that felled him as if he had been shot. The row at once became general, but the crew would have fared badly, being outnumbered, had not a party of the natives, led by a woman, come rushing in to the rescue.

There was the sharp, quick bark of a pistol, and then, panic-stricken, the foemen scattered. The roughs, headed by Grahame, fled into the darkness; McShouter had disappeared at the first of the conflict, and the rest, wonder-stricken, gazed down upon a bleeding and dying girl, for the deadly bullet had done deadly work.

The girl was the erring but repentant Kitty!

Bub sprang forward to her assistance and raised her in his arms.

"The end has come, Otis," she said, faintly, "and I won't trouble you any more with my love. That bad man urged me on; I listened to his counsel and was lost. He intended to murder, or at least disable you to-night. I bought the old villain over to my side and he betrayed him and I have saved you, and paid a price for it, too, but I don't regret it; it is better thus. Don't forget me very quick, for oh, Bub, I love you so much!"

With a powerful effort she essayed to wind her arms around his neck, but the attempt was too much for her weak strength, and with a long-drawn sigh she yielded up her young life.

There was not a dry eye in the room.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE RACE.

The morning broke bright and beautiful; no better day for the eventful contest could be desired.

The race was fixed for two o'clock, just an hour before high water, so that the current was almost slack.

Long before the appointed time, though, the banks on both sides of the river were lined with spectators, for if there is one aquatic contest above another that commands the patronage of the public, it is the college race, since it is supposed to be rowed upon the "square." Never yet in all the hotly-contested races between the college crews has there been the slightest suspicion of "foul play."

Blue and crimson ribbons, the colors of the contending crews, were freely displayed by the multitude, and it would have been no easy matter to decide which crew was the greatest favorite.

The Yale boys were the first to show, and as the light shell came swiftly down the stream a shout of welcome arose from the crowd.

And then right in the wake of Yale came the Harvard boat, the crew stripped to the waist and so tanned by the sun that they more resembled red Indians than white men.

Another shout went up, followed by the piercing college cry, "Rah—rah!" so familiar to the ears of those who have ever seen the crimson handkerchiefs come past the judge's stand, winners of the contest.

The boats were called up for the word.

"Are you ready, gentlemen?—Go!"

And even with the word away they went, Yale the first to take the water and so secure a lead. The pace was terrific, Yale pulling forty-two to the minute, but a ragged stroke and the shell rocking perceptibly, while Harvard on the contrary, was pulling about thirty-eight, but as smoothly and nicely as though it was only a practice row.

The first mile is over and Yale holds her own, a half-length in advance; the race is straight away without a turn.

"Yale wins!" the cry went up, but the old boating-men present shook their heads.

"She ain't gaining, and they can't hold out on that spurt!" so they said.

At the end of the second mile Yale dropped to forty to the minute; then to thirty-eight—Harvard pulling with the regularity of clock-work, gaining little by little.

The boats were even; the Yale captain calls upon his men, "Hit her up!" and, with all their strength, they respond; again they pull forty-two to the minute, and then for the first time old Harvard's Winning Oar speaks to her crew:

"Give it to 'em, boys! The race is ours!"

No quickening of stroke but simply more power thrown into the pull.

"The prow of Harvard shows in front; despite Yale's desperate efforts the crimson handkerchiefs go by the blue!"

Clear water between the boats—Harvard leads by a length—two lengths, three lengths—four, and by the judges' boat they go!

Harvard wins, and in the best time ever made.

Harrison Grahame, from the hillside, saw the result, realized that he was irretrievably ruined, and fled from the scene, never again to be seen in the eastern country, although his anxious creditors searched eagerly for him.

Just as the race ended and the peal of victory went up from a thousand throats, there was a commotion—a fight on the Groton hillside.

A roughly-attired old man, who had bet largely against Harvard, attempted to sneak away, when he saw how the race was going, without paying his wagers. He was detained, drew a knife and badly cut two of the country roughs with whom he was quarreling.

Of course he was hurried off to jail at once, and when he arrived there, after thinking what a hobble he had got himself into, he sent at once for Peyton, for the man was old Milligan.

"I want money and a lawyer to get me out of this," he explained.

"You'll get neither from me; you owe the State some service, and now you'll have to pay it," Peyton replied.

The tramp stormed, but the Virginian was stern; then, utterly beaten, Milligan made a bargain, and revealed a most important secret. Winny was not his child, but a girl whose parents had both died on the ship during the voyage from England, and the tramp had adopted her.

Milligan got his money and his lawyer and escaped with a slight imprisonment. Stern justice can sometimes be blinded if we throw enough gold-dust in her eyes.

And now that the barrier was removed, in time Winny became the wife of Lawrence, and the fair Helena also rewarded Peyton for his faithful services.

At the close of their college career Bub accompanied Peyton to his Virginian home, and perceiving a fine opportunity for energetic young men in the old "mother" State, joined forces with Peyton, and the sign, "Lawrence & Peyton, Attorneys-at-law," can be seen to-day in Richmond, by one who knows where to look for it.

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